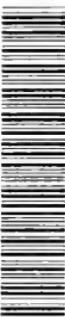


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PRISONERS OF HOPE

THE PROBLEM OF THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

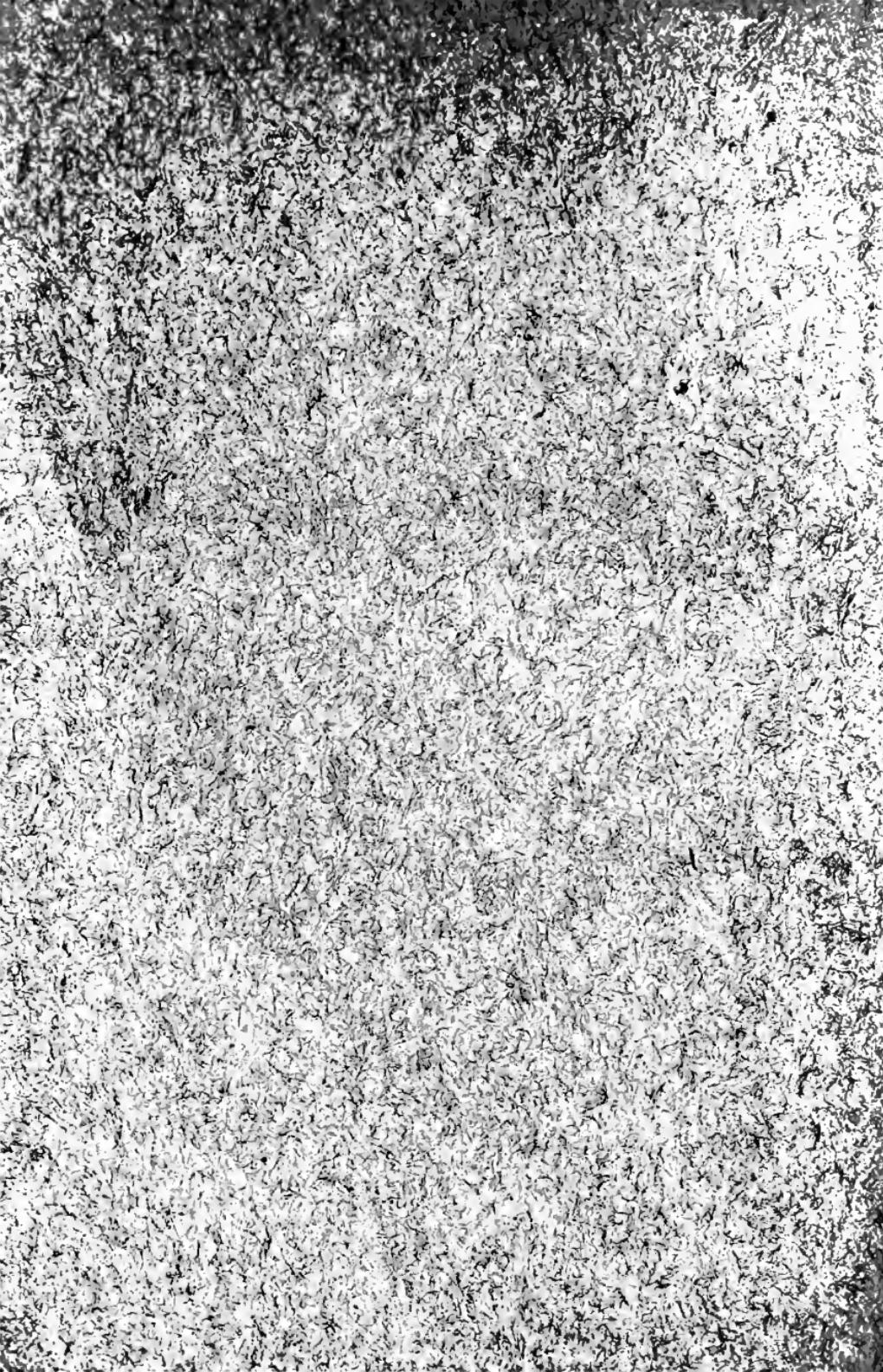
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Arthur S. Peake, M.A., D.D.

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First published in 1918

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PREFACE

A BRIEF statement is necessary to explain the origin of this book. From the first I had been greatly concerned about the treatment of conscientious objectors, and realized that the opening of a new era of persecution for religious and ethical convictions was a challenge which those who loved liberty and justice could not evade. Two motives prompted me: keen sympathy with the victims, though I did not share their views; and a desire that my own Church should be loyal to its ancient convictions, in spite of all temptations to surrender them for the duration of the war. In addition to signing various protests and appeals, I wrote twice on the subject for our denominational journal in the spring of 1916, and drafted a lengthy resolution dealing with all sides of the question, which was passed unanimously by the Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church in June of that year. In consequence of pressure from several quarters the situation grew easier, although it left much to be desired.

But in the summer of 1917 I realized that I must address my own Church on the subject again. I was about to do this when I learned of Mrs. Hobhouse's book "I Appeal Unto Cæsar." This seemed to provide the best starting-point for my articles. I drew on it for the facts, to which I was glad to give further publicity. But my main intention was different. I was anxious to explain the attitude of the objectors, to examine the criticisms urged against them, and to define the position to which we were committed by our principles. I wrote eleven articles in *The Primitive Methodist Leader* (Sept.-Dec., 1917) under the title "Who is Offended and I Burn Not?" I had no intention, when I began, of writing so many, but I found that number necessary. Still less did I contemplate the publication of a book. But I was urged from so many quarters to collect the articles in a more permanent form, and assured so strongly that they had been found helpful, that I could do no other than consent. The only consideration in such a matter is the furtherance of the cause. The articles have been slightly revised to fit them for their new function, but substantially they are unchanged.

The previous history of the book will explain the prominence given to the religious aspects of the subject. And while the book appeals to a

wider audience than the articles, it is still addressed primarily by a Christian to Christians. My claim to be heard, if I possess any, is that of a biblical student. I wish, however, to say explicitly that I recognize the equal validity of the objection on ethical with that on religious grounds, and gratefully acknowledge the splendid service rendered to the cause by those advocates who do not adopt the Christian point of view.

I am grateful to those who have supplied me with material for the Appendix. I have every reason to believe that the greatest care has been taken to secure its accuracy.

It is possible that some readers may need the information that my title is taken from Zechariah ix. 12. It may seem unduly optimistic; but I am persuaded, not without evidence, that a strong and increasing undercurrent of opinion and feeling is setting against the present treatment of the objectors. Lord Hugh Cecil's warning in his elevated speech on the mean little motion to disfranchise the conscientious objectors, and thus deprive them of a vote for availing themselves of the exemption offered by Act of Parliament, is, *mutatis mutandis*, equally applicable to our subject. "I think my right hon. Friend profoundly misjudges public opinion. They listen to a vocal, excitable, almost hysterical outburst,

but they do not hear the much deeper sentiment of the great body of the moral and religious people of this country who, whether they worship in church or chapel, will hear with indignation that conscientious objectors are to be disfranchised while every criminal is to have a vote." The history of persecution gives us solid ground for hope. But delay means more useless misery, pain, sickness, and death, more exasperation, bitterness, and disaffection. Wrongs have been done which can now never be righted. But present wrongs may be discontinued and fresh wrongs cease to be perpetrated. And must it always be to those who press for ruthlessness that the authorities listen? We also have a right to be heard, who desire with all our soul to support the Government in its struggle, but also to keep our hands clean and our ideals unsullied.

ARTHUR S. PEAKE.

"GAIRLOCH," FRESHFIELD, NEAR LIVERPOOL,
February 11, 1918

PRISONERS OF HOPE

I MAKE no apology for writing on behalf of the conscientious objector. If we lightly dismiss the unwelcome subject as too trivial to divert our attention from a struggle which taxes all our energies, we betray our failure to realize how grave are the principles involved, and how intimately they touch the foundations of society and religion. This is a question which goes to the very roots ; and we may easily surrender a position vital to Christianity under the blind delusion that we are simply washing our hands of a set of cowardly shirkers or, at the best, of obstinate fanatics. And on this matter it is more than time that multitudes of good Christians should drop their sentimentalism and enlighten their minds. Sooner or later the war will be over ; but the conflict between light and darkness, between freedom and oppression, between democracy and its foes, will continue to be fought out, and I am deeply concerned that our judgment shall not be deflected by passion, or the truths by which alone we live be unconsciously surrendered. I specially appeal to those who have fought the battle of freedom and

progress in the past and who hope to fight it again, urging them not to scrap their principles for the duration of the war. They may reasonably surmise that their words are being scrutinized by their old antagonists, and that highly inconvenient collections of unguarded utterances are being compiled for their future confusion. We may be plunged, when the war is over, into a domestic controversy on the infringement of our liberties or the violation of our principles, or Britain may be committed to an unjust war; but I fear that we have already seriously weakened ourselves for any effective protest. Cries that once roused our enthusiasm because they embodied our deepest convictions will ring hollow when we hear them again; for we shall not forget those other utterances which will have largely emptied them of their meaning. The stress of the present is urgent, but the future must never be absent from our thoughts. We must not be lured into the morass by any will-o'-the-wisp. It is vital for us to "look after the war," but mischievous to let "'after the war' look after itself." We must not wait till after the war, and in particular we must not cheerfully sacrifice our principles now, in the vain belief that they will be all ready for use when the war is over.

A special responsibility lies on those who disagree with the conscientious objectors, to plead for justice and try to explain a point of view which they do not share. The pacifist may do something by explaining his principles and suffering

for them ; but inevitably his arguments will be discounted on account of his pacifism and his sufferings regarded as what he richly deserves. But those who believe in the righteousness of this war, but in whom the flame of freedom and of love burns with unweakened intensity, ought not to shirk the odium of pleading an unpopular cause.

We owe a great debt to Mrs. Hobhouse for her courage in publishing "*I Appeal Unto Cæsar*." It is a book which cannot be brushed aside by any who sincerely love their fellows, who care for the reputation of their country, and who have not suffered any of their Christianity to be submerged by the tidal wave of military emotionalism. Mrs. Hobhouse is no pacifist ; she believes the war is righteous. She endorses President Wilson's judgment that it is "a peoples' war for freedom, justice, and self-government, a war to make the world safe for the peoples who live in it." She is not drawn from those circles where we naturally expect sympathy with conscientious objectors. Her husband is a Privy Councillor and a magistrate, an Ecclesiastical Commissioner, Chairman of a County Council and of the County Council Association. He was educated at Eton and Balliol, and took his first in Greats at Oxford ; he is a barrister who has practised as parliamentary draftsman and counsel ; and for nearly twenty years he was a Unionist Member of Parliament. If those have a special claim to be heard on this subject who have fought, or whose sons have fought, she amply satisfies this test. She has three sons

at the Front, one of whom has been twice wounded. She also approaches the question from a more painful side. Another son, Mr. Stephen Hobhouse, is serving a sentence of two years' hard labour in gaol, and has already served one sentence of 112 days' hard labour. For the last ten years he has been a convinced Quaker; he gave up his position and prospects as his father's eldest son; he has lived a life of considerable privation in a workman's flat; he resigned his post on the Board of Education that he might work among the refugees in Constantinople, where he shared their privations during the first Balkan war. Since he was ten he has suffered from dilatation of the heart, and could never join in games when at Eton and Balliol. He is also extremely short-sighted. Sir Thomas Barlow, who had known him since childhood, has given a certificate as to his unfitness for military service. The army doctor pronounced him unfit for the hard-labour sentence which was nevertheless imposed upon him. His brothers "and his family generally are strongly in favour of prosecuting the war, but they feel that Stephen Hobhouse, the Quaker preacher, should have been totally exempted, and permitted to continue his merciful work in the service of his God and his country." Even the Secretary of State for War admitted the genuineness of his conscientious objection in the rigid speech he made on November 14, 1917, in the House of Lords debate. Lord Bryce said in the same debate: "I have never met any one of a more perfectly

simple, upright, and gentle character. He is a man who has devoted his whole life to the relief of suffering and to doing good as he found the opportunity, and it is perfectly tragic to think that a man of this kind should be singled out, owing to the tenacity with which he holds his views, for such suffering as has been described."

An Introduction to the book has been written by Professor Gilbert Murray. Our friendship has lasted for nearly a third of a century, so that I speak of him, not only for his distinguished public record, but from my personal knowledge. I do not dwell on his brilliant academic career, his eminent contributions to classical learning, or the exquisite translations from Euripides which have brought him a wider and still more enduring fame. I turn to qualities and activities more relevant to the subject. He has been conspicuous, ever since I have known him, for his flaming love of freedom, his sympathy with the oppressed, his humanitarian passion. The disillusionment and weariness of middle life have not cooled his ardour; high position and international reputation have not estranged him from his earlier faith. But he cannot be dismissed as a mere scholar or a recluse out of touch with practical life, or as a man unversed in affairs. Steadfast in his political loyalty, he has laboured long for the party to which he is attached. His love of freedom swung him, lover of peace though he was, into approval and defence of the war, as it swung many more of us. He went on an important mission to

Sweden, that he might present the British case to the people of that country. He wrote a notable defence of British foreign policy before the war. He too has earned the right to be heard by those who will listen to no one who disapproves of the war. He writes also from intimate personal knowledge of the subject. He does not agree with the conscientious objectors; but after using his utmost exertions to overcome by private persuasion the scruples of those with whom he was brought into contact, he did what he could to see that they obtained their legal rights. In addition to Professor Murray's very weighty, temperate, and closely reasoned Preface, Mrs. Hobhouse prints expressions of opinion from Lord Selborne, Lord Parmoor, Lord Hugh Cecil, and Lord Henry Bentinck.

Mrs. Hobhouse's book is concerned, not with the whole problem of conscientious objectors, but with the problem of the extremists who refuse all alternative service. The great majority of conscientious objectors have been anxious to accept alternative service provided it was not military, Ambulance, relief, or reconstruction work under the Society of Friends was on the whole preferred to other forms of such service. Professor Murray says: "I know two objectors who specially sought out employment in minesweepers, because it was at least as dangerous as ordinary fighting, and at the same time it aimed at saving life, not destroying it." But considerable numbers of men take up an extreme position. They refuse all alternative

service. Their position is unintelligible to the plain citizen, and he thinks he has done his duty by them when he has dismissed them as unpatriotic cowards or impossible cranks. Yet it must be confessed that the matter is not so simple. As to personal character, deep-rooted and long-standing conviction, record of self-sacrifice and public service, genuine courage, the facts are convincing. Professor Murray says : " Of course I think they are wrong—tragically wrong. I think also that many of them have other minor faults of a most irritating character ; that is all beside the point." He says elsewhere : " But as far as I have any individual knowledge of them, they are men of exceptionally high character and devoted lives ; and beyond all doubt they are being treated with the most unintelligent brutality."

The Marquess of Salisbury, who had been for a long time President of the Central Tribunal, after saying that conscientious objectors were of very various kinds, proceeded : " I want to speak of the real conscientious objectors in a tone of sympathy. We questioned them as to the faith that is in them, and no man could rise from such an examination without being deeply impressed with the high character and profound convictions of many of these men."

The main counts against the conscientious objectors are somewhat as follows. In the first place it is urged that they are declining one of the fundamental duties of the citizen, the defence of his country. Secondly, even if their conscience

forbids them to take part in war, they ought to do something to help their country. Thirdly, it is urged that it is base to accept all the privileges of citizenship and refuse its primary obligations. Fourthly, I find that feeling is very bitter that they should be left in safety at home while others have to endure all the risks and horrors of war. This, of course, is felt very keenly by multitudes whose near relatives are fighting at the front and by the soldiers themselves ; but I have found it also among those whose personal sympathies are not so deeply engaged, and, I confess with some surprise, among those who are in quite sheltered positions, enjoying all the advantages of their country with immunity from its responsibilities, and who are lifting no finger to help it in the prosecution of the war. Among some who have thought about the position, I find a tendency to feel that too much is being made of the individual conscience, especially in the immature who are hardly old enough to have a right to any conscientious objection and who ought to swallow it in deference to the judgment of their seniors. Individual liberty has become too much a fetish with us, and we need to strike the note of authority. It is accordingly urged that they should make their protest if they will, but submit ; otherwise, if deference to conscience is pushed to an extreme, we shall be landed in a moral anarchism.

On these criticisms I must comment, and then, so far as it may still be necessary, I will try to put the position of the extreme conscientious

objectors so far as I am able to understand it. I fully recognize that one who feels that the hope of the future is bound up with the prosecution of the war to a successful issue, and who deeply disagrees with the conscientious objectors, may not be able to state their case as it should be stated, but at least the desire will not be wanting.

II

I BEGIN with the charge that in refusing to defend their country the conscientious objectors are declining one of the fundamental duties of citizenship. I leave over for the present the larger question of patriotism as a duty, because it arises at a later point. The assumption is that if a man's country is attacked he is under the obligation to defend it by force. The Briton must defend Britain, the Frenchman France, the German Germany, the Russian Russia. This is affirmed as if it were axiomatic. A man must stand by his country, and if need be die for it, just as he would defend his wife or his child from violence. But I do not feel clear that this can safely be stated as an absolute principle without qualification. For it takes no account of the moral issues which may be involved. If in the present struggle a German becomes convinced that his country is guilty of a crime against God and humanity, are we as Christians to say that he must nevertheless co-operate in that crime, and condemn him as failing in a primary duty if he throws down his arms in obedience to his conscience? If we accept the political ethics now dominant in Germany, we should, of course, condemn him. When we read

the words of those who seem best to embody the spirit which has launched Germany into this war, and has conducted it with criminal disregard of international right and the principles of humanity, we realize that, in their judgment, for the individual to appeal to his conscience from the decision of the State would be as irrational as for a Christian to appeal to his conscience from the command of God. There is no higher morality which he can invoke to absolve him from blind obedience to the orders of his country.

But no Christian could possibly admit such a principle without stultifying himself, and indeed without renouncing his Christianity. For the Christian is bound to desire above all things, not that his country may triumph but that the will of God may be done. And unless he can hold that the will of God always coincides with the cause of his country it is obvious that a conflict between the lower and the higher duty will inevitably arise and he must accept the higher. It is part of the Prussian militarism which we hate that this preference of the higher to the lower duty receives short shrift. Those who adopt the apostolic maxim "We must obey God rather than man" are, I believe, liable to be shot; and it is understood that this penalty was actually inflicted in a number of cases at the beginning of the war. The Germans are a logical people, and if we want to see the real nature of militarism, naked and unashamed, they have given us a demonstration, the memory of which will abide for

generations to come. But the ethical is the universal; the laws of morality do not change as we pass from land to land, however diverse ethical ideals and practices may be. Accordingly we must recognize the possibility that Britain might be committed to an unjust war. In such a case there is a collision between the will of God and the policy of the country. Ought a Christian to defend his country when his country is fighting against God?

Now our own recent history is instructive on this point. The Boer War is fresh in the memory of most of us. I felt that there had been grave faults on both sides, but my sympathies were ranged on the side of Britain. A large number, however, especially in the Free Churches and the Liberal and Labour Parties, took the opposite view. Naturally their meetings were wrecked, and even their lives were threatened. These things always happen in a war; and it is the duty of every Christian, whether in favour of the particular war or not, to modify this intolerant temper, while it is the duty of the authorities sternly to repress its illegal manifestations.

But now we are confronted with a very interesting situation. Many who were most violent in denouncing the Boer War are most fervent in their advocacy of this, and even bitter in their criticism of those who do not share their views. Now, had compulsory service been introduced during the Boer War, what would the attitude of our friends have been? They would have fought

it with tenacity, and thrown every ounce of influence they possessed into the cause of the conscientious objector. They would not, in doing so, have pleaded simply that the war was unjust. Our platforms would have rung with our old watchwords, the inviolable rights of conscience, the intolerable grievance that the State should force a man to act in violation of it, all the battle-cries which have done duty in the long struggle for civil and religious liberty down to the passive resistance movement. Ah ! when the old struggles are back again, with what heart shall we raise them, dreading the swift, the inevitable, the fatal retort ?

But it will be urged that the situation has changed, and that the old principles remain, but with a new application. The situation, of course, has changed, but I fear that new principles have emerged. I do those of whom I am speaking the justice to believe that if England were engaged in what they felt to be an unjust war they would revert to the attitude which they took up towards the Boer War. But I seriously fear that they would find this attitude no longer tenable except at the cost of a real inconsistency. For I have had it irresistibly borne in upon me by their utterances that it will be difficult to justify on their present principles opposition to any war we may wage in the future, or to justify approval of those who hold aloof from their country in her hour of need. For the stress of the appeal has been put, not only on the righteousness of our cause, but on the peril of the country.

Now, both of these are, in my judgment, legitimate grounds, and I heartily sympathize with them in present conditions. But it is only the first which makes the second ground legitimate for us. No doubt the principle "My country, right or wrong," would rally vast numbers of our countrymen to it, but surely not those who take their Christianity in earnest! But what I fear is that those who have expressed themselves in such stern reprobation of those who will take no part in this war will find it very difficult to justify their own opposition to an unjust war, or their defence of those who may push that opposition to the point of refusing to accept military service. The Boer War might easily have developed into a situation in which our Empire would have been imperilled. Would that have altered the moral judgment passed on the war, or the policy which that judgment would have implied? Would they have said, "*Fiat justitia, ruat Britannia*"? The question of our country's peril is, of course, an extremely grave one, and I will not say that it is not arguable that a point might arise at which a Christian might not debate whether it would be the lesser wrong to abstain from the war, or, in view of all that Britain stands for, to engage in it. But as a practical issue, I think it ought to be granted that the need of the country is a legitimate ground of appeal to others only if the cause of the country is just. If, then, the appeal is to carry weight, not merely to Christians who make it, but to Christians to whom it is made

it must be based on the righteousness of the cause. But what has often seemed to me to be the attitude has been something like this : " Undeniably the country is in straits. *I* think the war is just, therefore *you* ought to go." And, unquestionably, two things have combined to make the case of the conscientious objector more than usually difficult —the very large consensus of opinion as to the righteousness of our cause, and the very serious character of the risk we run. As a matter of personal opinion, I hold that the war is just, and I recognize that, while there is no cause for panic, the situation is terribly serious. But I have no right to appeal to any man on the second issue unless I have convinced him on the first ; still less have I the right to condemn him or to hold him up to public execration. Now, there are two lines on which the conscientious objector may fall back. He may argue, as multitudes did in the Boer War, that a particular war is unjust. Possibly he might admit that in its inception it may have been right, but that we are wrong in continuing it without seeking peace by negotiation. Or he may take the view that this war cannot be righteous because war is an activity in which a Christian is forbidden to engage.

While I dissent from the view that the present war is unrighteous, I recognize that there is a case for it. Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Morley were strongly opposed to the Boer War. The former has been in a large measure the soul and the driving energy of our present conflict, and is

now Prime Minister of the country. But Lord Morley resigned office on the declaration of war. He is a statesman of long experience, vast knowledge, and incorruptible integrity, a statesman, moreover, who understands the theory of politics and knows their history as probably none of our politicians. My judgment pitted against his would be worthless, though I venture to hold my own opinion. But, while holding it, I feel it salutary to remember that so great an authority is not with the Government in this matter. And I believe that many who would grant that on the immediate cause of the war Britain was right as against Germany, would nevertheless hold that our diplomacy in the years preceding the war had been in some degree responsible for the conflict. I do not sympathize with this view, and would commend as a statement of the case, written two years before the war by one who is not an Englishman, Mr. Sarolea's "The Anglo-German Problem." All, however, I am concerned to point out is that a conscientious objector who took up this ground would not be without argument and authority to support him.

While I have known of conscientious objectors who take the ground that this war is unjust, the majority, I suppose, base their refusal to serve on the ground that war is absolutely wrong in itself. Most of these feel that their religious profession requires them to take this stand; war is for them the negation of Christianity. Others, who are not Christians, put their refusal on ethical and

humanitarian grounds. The former position is familiar to us all, and I was under the impression that it was well understood. There is no body of Christians in the country which has stood higher in public esteem and the regard of the Churches than the Society of Friends. It was well known that if compulsory service was introduced the problem presented by the Friends would have to be faced. But it was not so clearly realized that the Friends by no means stood alone in holding this view. Many shared it, in the Churches and outside. Accordingly the solution suggested in the House of Commons, that exemption should be granted to *bona fide* members of such religious bodies as held the unlawfulness of war, would not have covered the ground. Moreover it would very probably have led to considerable resignation of membership in the Society of Friends on the part of men of military age, who would have felt that they could not accept an advantage for themselves which was not granted to others who held their views on this matter. The Government unquestionably intended to give the Tribunals power to grant absolute exemption in cases of this kind, and had this intention been carried out the present scandal would not have arisen.

In view of all this, and in view of the fact that in our desperate and long-continued struggle with Napoleon exemption was given, it is surprising that so unsympathetic an attitude has been shown by members of the Christian Church, not to mention the great non-Christian or nominally Christian

population. And the kind of resentment which some seem to have felt at the plea of conscientious objection on the lips of non-Quakers has amazed me. The position has been familiar to me for many years. More than thirty years ago I had felt the spell of Tolstoy's genius and had been deeply impressed by his impassioned plea for an uncompromising acceptance of the principle of non-resistance.

From the special pleading which bent the words of Jesus into harmony with conventional standards I turned to a teacher who insisted that He meant what He said. There were elements in the problem which I did not realize, and the canons of interpretation were all too narrow; but while I have long ceased to sympathize with Tolstoy's views (a disciple of his I never was), the recollection of my own sympathy long ago helps me to understand why they seem so convincing to many to-day. That they had worked as a powerful leaven in European thought I should have regarded as unquestioned. On this point, however, I will fall back on the much greater authority of Professor Murray. He says: "The greatest of all modern men of letters, whose books sold by the hundred thousand in almost every country in Europe, had devoted himself to a spiritual crusade against war and violence in any shape. Tolstoy's doctrines were so extreme that actual Tolstoyans were rare; but almost every young man and woman in Europe who possessed any free religious life at all had been to some extent influenced by Tolstoy." It

lies quite outside my purpose to discuss the correctness of Tolstoy's interpretation of our Lord's teaching or that given by the Quakers. In spite of my disagreement with it, it appears to me a fact which deserves to be pondered that the teaching of Jesus taken at its face value seems to forbid all resistance to evil ; and it is significant that this interpretation was deliberately adopted, not simply by immature idealists, but by a writer of Tolstoy's ripe experience, great intellectual power, and immense influence. It is possible that he is right and that we are wrong. I am bound as an exegete to remember that our prepossessions may warp our judgment, and that our loyalty to the teaching of Jesus, combined with our conviction that the war is right, may lead us to press the teaching into harmony with that conviction.

On this point I had some interesting evidence lately. Mr. G. G. Armstrong, who fully believes in the righteousness of the war, and has published several things in connexion with it, delivered on June 13, 1917, his Presidential Address, "The World's New Hope," to the Provincial Assembly of Presbyterian and Unitarian Ministers and Congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire. Inevitably the question arose of the relation in which his view and that of those who thought with him stood to the teaching of Jesus. He recognized that in this matter they had regretfully parted company with Him. He said : "Those of us—and I among them—who made up our minds that at this stage of our civilization we *must* repel force

with force had to make up our minds, saying that, how we stood to the Founder of our religion. And many of us said—nurtured as we are in the traditions of sincerity and simplicity—that we would not attempt to say that what we had decided we must do was in consonance with the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. We had to make up our minds that we must say in grief and humility that in this thing here and now we disagreed with our Master." I want the significance of this to be clearly realized. The more sacred an authority is to us, the more necessary we feel our agreement with it to be. But the more intensely we hold our own opinions, the greater becomes our temptation to persuade ourselves that the sacred authority endorses them. Obviously, then, those who accept the Catholic doctrine of Christ's Person feel that they cannot set aside the authority of Christ in this realm so easily as those can for whom He is a supreme religious teacher, but still no more essentially than one of ourselves. Orthodox believers are accordingly exposed to the temptation to explain His teaching in harmony with their own prepossessions; whereas those who reject the Catholic Christology will feel no serious difficulty in differing from Jesus, though it may be with deep regret. Their detachment saves their opinion from being deflected by the same bias. I think, then, it must in fairness be admitted that there is a real case for the plea of the conscientious objector that Jesus totally forbade war to His followers. On

the whole I believe that He did not, but as a New Testament student I am hardly prepared to go beyond that point. If, then, a Christian tells me that he is convinced that loyalty to the explicit command of our common Lord forbids his participation in this or any war, I can only say to him that there is much to be said for his view as well as for mine, and that, if this is his serious conviction, formed with a scrupulous desire to reach the truth by patient thought and with due regard to the arguments on the other side, he must be true to the light as he is able to see it.

Few can have had prolonged experience in exegetical work without gaining an intense and indeed at times an almost paralysing sense of the grave uncertainties in which the interpretation of Scripture is involved. The commentator is schooled in distrust of his first impressions, in suspicion of his own judgment; he is constantly forced to recognize that the view he finally rejects may after all be right; rough-and-ready opinions, off-hand decisions become anathema to him; he realizes how arduous is his path, how remote his goal. And thus he is trained in patience with those who differ from him and in respectful tolerance of their views. He keeps an open mind, is ready to revise his cherished conclusions if adequate reason can be shown. I am indeed only too conscious how far I am from having attained that serene impartiality, that disinterested regard for Truth,

which has risen above all prejudice and has laid upon her altar every prepossession. But it is something to have seen the ideal and have greeted it, though from afar. At least I will not be so false to the discipline of the work as to pretend that in this matter the whole argument is entirely on my side. I dare not use the language about the pacifists that many Christians permit themselves to use, because I cannot shut my eyes to the possibility that Jesus Himself may have been a pacifist.

When, then, I am told that the conscientious objector in refusing to defend his country is declining to discharge a fundamental duty, I cannot admit the justice of the accusation. His first duty is not to himself, his family, his municipality, his country, or to humanity. His first duty is to God. When, after seeking by the best means in his power to enlighten his mind and liberate his judgment, he has reached the conviction that armed resistance is contrary to the will of God, he is bound to accept it at whatever cost. I regret that there is any need to labour such an axiom. The Christian must follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; and if Jesus took up His position without the pale, then we must "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Our city is dear to us, our country dearer still, humanity dearer than either. But here we have no abiding city, for our true home is in the eternal and the unseen. From the swift procession of unstable empires we

look for the city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. We confess ourselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, whose true citizenship is in heaven. For us the Kingdom of God is incomparably greater than all earthly kingdoms, and our loyalty is pledged to a more august imperialism than the imperialism of Rome or of Britain. We know a loftier patriotism than the love of our native land or the deeper love which embraces all mankind. Our heart thrills to the challenge of Marcus Aurelius : " He says; ' Dear city of Cecrops ' ; wilt thou not say, ' Dear City of God ' ? " Indeed, for multitudes of us it is this higher patriotism which inspires and sustains the lower.

In the conflict with the Central Powers we feel that the interests of God's Kingdom are vitally involved, and for us it is a matter of conscience to fling all our resources into this desperate conflict with the cynical forces of evil, entrenched so firmly and so astutely led. But it is just this sense of the moral and spiritual element in the conflict which makes us sensitive also to the degree in which the kingdom of Satan is established in our midst. We need not be Pharisees if we affirm that the Central Powers have reverted to methods of barbarism from which we have kept ourselves free. But we should be Pharisees of the worst type if we failed to recognize that there is amongst us altogether too much of the Prussian temper. It is no surprise that military representatives should believe that Jesus gave utterance to the

principle "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," or that the Yellow Press should regard "A bomb for a bomb" as God's law. But there are Christians who might never have heard of the Sermon on the Mount, and seem as if in this respect they had never got beyond the Old Testament. Certainly I have in my own mind no shadow of doubt that our national treatment of conscientious objectors is coloured by the intolerance, the vindictiveness, the military temper against which this war is on its nobler side a protest. And just as little do I doubt that there rests on those who are responsible for it and on those who urge them on to it the displeasure of Almighty God. Perhaps in some Damascus vision the shattering question may be pushed home on some blinded consciences, "Why persecutest thou Me?"

III

I HAVE no doubt that many will allow that the position of those who refuse to fight is not indefensible, but will urge that there is no excuse for men who will not help the country in some other way. To "help the country," however, is an ambiguous phrase. It may mean what we should understand by it in normal times. In peace most of us are helping the country all the time. We may help it by contributing to its spiritual, its moral, its material welfare. The scholar and the scientist, the author, the teacher, the preacher and the legislator, the administrator, the judge, the policeman are all helping the country. So is the manufacturer and those whom he employs, the farmer and the agricultural labourer, those who facilitate locomotion and transport, the distributor and the retailer. There are people who are hindering the country all the time, the brewer and distiller and those whom they employ, the publican, the bookmaker, and all who cater for the vices which are rotting our civilization, the author of unwholesome literature, the rabid writer in our newspapers, the owner of slum property. Now, in a great war the conditions are radically altered, as we know to our cost. The motto

"Business as usual" gives place to the cry "Victory as usual," and helping the country takes on a new meaning. The war has to be financed; the primary necessities of life have to be provided, alike for the army and the civilian. The food problem, especially on an island exposed to ruthless submarine campaign, becomes acute hence a Government embarks on compulsory regulation of industry, and takes measures to regulate and ensure the supply of food. Circumstances, of course, may be too strong for it, or it may not have the courage of its convictions. It may paralyse industry necessary for the prosecution of the war, or run the risk of losing it through starvation, by its toleration of intoxicants, but where it is not afraid to apply pressure it will do it.

The Government rightly puts in the forefront the winning of the war. Now, many would urge that the total resources of the country should be mobilized for the purpose, that everything should be scrapped which did not contribute directly or indirectly to military triumph. Essential industries would have to go on, but everything non-essential would be abandoned, or carried on by those who were of no military value in any capacity. If the principle were pushed to its logical conclusion, our schools would be very largely closed; the very young children would perhaps be left in charge of old men and women, while their mothers worked in munition factories and the elder children made themselves generally useful; and the teachers would be given something really serviceable to

do, something that would help the country. It goes without saying that all ministers and clergy who were of the slightest use would be caught up into the military machine. Men of military age would be drafted into the ranks; those above military age would have to give up wasting their time in their study and their pulpit, and get to work on some form of national service such as the need and the peril of the country demanded. They would be told that it would do the Church good to be thrown on its own resources, while their humility would be fostered by the lesson that they were not indispensable. Professors are by common consent so useless that the lowest positions in the military economy would provide them with an ample sphere for their talents.

The Government, however, has not, as a matter of fact, taken this line. Preoccupation with the present and the material has not obliterated from its outlook the future and the spiritual. Education cannot be neglected in order that teachers and children may be pressed into service. Indeed, the Prime Minister has had the wisdom to invite an educational expert to become the Minister of Education; and Mr. Fisher has introduced, and it is to be hoped will succeed in placing on the Statute Book, a great measure of educational reform. The question of the franchise is being thoroughly overhauled, and changes of the most far-reaching order are being carried into effect. And all this is happening while we are fighting for our very existence. An attempt is even being

made to settle the Irish Question, so long our reproach throughout civilization.

Similarly the work of the ministry is recognized to be of value, though, apart from war sermons, it does little for the present emergency. Logically, the actual position may not be defensible. The total exemption from conscription given to ministers has been widely resented, and undoubtedly places the ministry in an invidious position. We are all familiar with the bitter criticisms which it has evoked. In particular, it is urged that if the war is at the present juncture the most sacred form of activity, the clergy and the ministers who preach this to their congregations are morally bound to lead the way. There is just as much force in this as there is in the argument about the conscientious objector that I am discussing. And certainly I think that the ministry would have stood much higher in England to-day had there been a closer correspondence between action and utterance. I cannot myself understand how ministers of military age can use the language that some have used to the young men of their Churches without themselves setting the example which they criticize others for not following. If the war means all they say, then the plain man will not understand how they can condemn the slackness of others and answer to their own conscience for failure to offer themselves. And in this connexion I call special attention to the case of Mr. Wilfred Wellock. He is a preacher in a denomination which has no paid ministry. An arrangement was made be-

tween the denomination and the War Office whereby all the preachers on their plan who applied for exemption should receive it. But Mr. Wellock "refused to take advantage of this way of escape, as he regarded the exemption of ministers as a class privilege unjust and unwarrantable." In consequence of this, Mrs. Hobhouse tells us, "he has served a sentence of three months' hard labour, been again court-martialled, and is now back in prison serving a second sentence of two years' hard labour." I think some readers of her book will wince when they think out the moral of this case.

My moral, however, is that the Government itself explicitly, and large numbers of ministers tacitly, in spite of the conviction that the war is of paramount importance, recognize that even in the present stress forms of service are legitimate which are not essential to the prosecution of the war or the maintenance of vital industries. The significance attached in time of peace to "helping the country" has not been wholly obliterated by our perilous situation. There is no necessity for us to be more militarist than the War Office and the War Cabinet. If they are satisfied that the interests of the country are not jeopardized by this exemption, we are not called upon to protest, however invidious and illogical it may seem to be. The onus of decision is placed, and placed rightly, on the individual conscience.

Now the case of most of these conscientious objectors is precisely analogous. Almost all of those

who are now in prison would have been helping the country, and indeed, if material considerations alone are to count, most of them were helping the country by work in essential employment. In other words they were more useful to the country, regarded as a fighting machine, than the clergy and ministers. Many of them, like Mr. Stephen Hobhouse, were doing social work of great importance which involved serious self-sacrifice. Mrs. Hobhouse says: "They were doing useful work—many of them very laborious and self-sacrificing work, and would, if released, do it again, but that, in making their protest and suffering for their faith, they believe (though most people think wrongly) that they are best serving the cause of humanity. They say: 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' "

But the ambiguous phrase "to help the country" really means, in the reproach addressed to the objectors, to help the country in its struggle with Germany. It is a euphemism for helping the country to win the war. The reproach against them is that they stand aloof when their country is in peril. If they feel that killing their fellow-men is murder, and that the Gospel enjoins non-resistance, well and good, but at least, short of the actual killing, let them do something for their native land. I am afraid that I am not clever enough to appreciate the distinction. It is allowed that conscience may forbid them to beat the Germans directly; but it is not realized that it equally forbids them to beat the Germans indirectly. There is nothing

in principle to choose between the man who kills, the man who will not kill but makes munitions or invests in War Loan to enable others to kill, the man who releases another that he may kill, the man who prays for victory which can be won only by killing, or preaches sermons designed to lead others to go and kill. English law does not acquit a man from the charge of murder because he has not himself used the poison or the knife ; and these men feel that to promote the war involves them in guilt as deep as does actual participation in the fighting. I do not regard war in a just cause as murder, any more than I so regard capital punishment ; but there are multitudes who do, and not Quakers alone, as the popularity in peace time of the famous lines in "The Biglow Papers" sufficiently proves. To offer such men non-combatant military service obviously did not meet the case. The very essence of their position was violated by it. On the other hand, service conditional on acceptance of work of national importance was something that the tribunals were for a long time reluctant to grant. In a large number of cases, however, this has met the conscientious scruple. It is quite true that a scheme of this kind is inevitably very wasteful, for it frequently involves the removal of a man from a position in which he was really helping the country by work for which he was well qualified, and setting him to do work of no greater value for which he was unfitted alike by nature and by training. What commended it, however, was that it supplied

a kind of stone-breaking test for sincerity of conviction ; it met a rough, popular sense of justice, at least to some extent ; and it pleased the people who judge a country's activity by the amount of inconvenience and dislocation it causes to individuals. But it did not meet the difficulties of the absolutists.

IV

LITTLE need be said on the criticism that it is base for objectors to accept the privileges of their country and yet refuse to shoulder the obligation to defend it. All I have said about the higher and the lower duty, the possible collision between loyalty to God and loyalty to one's country, is relevant here. A man may love his country with passionate intensity, he may be willing to die for it, but he ought not to sin for it. And for these men war, not simply in the act of slaughter, but in all its ramifications, is sin. It is useless to say that they are wrong. Probably no martyr has ever suffered but a large body of opinion has thought him wrong. We are up against an ultimate fact. These men are prepared to suffer the stigma and the penalty of disloyalty to their country that they may not be traitors to the King of Kings. They have not flinched when the death sentence has been pronounced, nor even when its execution seemed imminent.

It is not quite easy for us to find a good modern parallel which should exhibit the principle, detached from all the heat and prejudice in which our problem is involved. But on the question of loyalty in the time of war I recall the case of Jeremiah.

When the siege of Jerusalem was in progress he advocated his pro-Babylonian policy. He encouraged desertion to the enemy, he counselled surrender. No wonder that the military authorities demanded his punishment on the ground that he was weakening the defence of the city, or that he was flung into a noisome pit, there to perish of starvation. Not only did he undertake no military duty, he carried on an active propaganda against the war. A greatly respected Principal of a theological college once said to me that they ought to have taken him out and shot him. He was referring, of course, to the duty of the authorities from a military point of view. But had they done so, we should have seen in his murder at once a blunder and a crime. No one can have studied the career of Jeremiah with any attention and failed to recognize the loftiness and intensity of his patriotism. It was his clear-sighted devotion to his country which was the animating principle of his stop-the-war campaign. The generation which built the tombs of the prophets could send the Son of God to the Cross ; and we who write our commentaries on Jeremiah, which breathe deep love and passionate admiration for the supreme figure among the prophets, may fitly ask ourselves how such a man with such a message would fare at the hands of this generation.

But perhaps a closer parallel may be found in the relation between the Roman Empire and the Primitive Church. The Church owed not a little

to the Empire. To a world in which war scarcely ever ceased, the Empire brought the Roman peace. It had risen out of a series of appalling civil wars, and the memory of their horrors made men grateful for calm and security after terror and storm. Roman justice saved the preachers of the Gospel from the fanaticism of the Jews. It provided them with the securities of civilization for the prosecution of their work. The New Testament counsels that prayer should be offered for the Emperor, and that the authorities should have no cause to complain of disloyalty. But collision was bound to come, for the test of loyalty was one which a Christian could not satisfy without renouncing his faith. The picture "Diana or Christ" misses the point. Treason consisted in the refusal to sacrifice to the genius of the Emperor. A pinch of incense on the altar—that was all; but the early Christians faced torture and death, often in horrible forms, rather than comply with the observance of what seemed a trifling convention. But this custom of polite society, which simply expressed a loyalty that they themselves sincerely felt, involved an impossible act of idolatry. It is wholesome for us to read what the best of their contemporaries, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, or the younger Pliny, thought of their intractable obstinacy, their sour perversity.

But how close the parallel is will hardly be clear unless we realize how much more intimately religion entered into what we should call the secular life than it does amongst ourselves. A patriotic

agnostic will not, as a rule, make any fuss about singing "God Save the King." Formally it is an appeal to a Power in which he does not believe to answer a prayer which he regards it as irrational to offer. But he sings it because it is the conventional expression of a loyalty which he really feels. He would regard it as bad form to let a mere religious scruple prevent him from being true to the substance while disbelieving in the expression. But I imagine that very few people suppose that it would make any actual difference either to king or country whether he sang the national anthem or scrupulously abstained. It was different in antiquity. In a low grade of civilization the stranger and the enemy are almost convertible terms. And what is true of men is true of ideas. The hostility to new faces has its counterpart in a hostility to new thoughts. The tyranny of the dead hand, the burden of immemorial custom, exercise over the uncivilized a sway we can but dimly understand. Change stands for them as treason to the past, a squandering of the deposit they have been charged to guard. Where custom is king, novelty must be banned as an outlaw. And the hate inspired by progress is reinforced by dread. The savage moves cautiously amid a whole network of restrictions ; at every step he takes in life he must beware of breaking taboos. The whole system under which he lives fetters his will and blinds his reason. Safety is purchased at the price of stagnation ; he dare not adventurously strike out in a new path for the

peril that may lurk by the way. Moreover, these taboos have the sanction of religion ; to defy them is not merely to be guilty of disloyalty to the past and to risk the danger of the unknown, it is also to brave the wrath of the supernatural powers. And since primitive mankind has little sense of the individual, and looks rather on the clan or tribe as the social unit, the transgressor brings disaster, not on himself only, but on his people, just as Achan by his sin is said to have troubled the whole of Israel. What wonder, then, that the car of progress has been a car of Juggernaut, crushing its devotees beneath its wheels as it has lumbered heavily up the hill, bearing the load of a reluctant humanity ?

The reformer and innovator have expiated in contempt, agony, and blood their outrage on convention. And when religion is in question the hostility to change goes deeper still. There is no conservatism so intense as what is known as "the conservatism of the religious instinct." Hence the hostility to change never receives more passionate expression than when it touches religion. Partly this is due to the depth and intensity of feeling that religion excites. It is one of the strongest passions of human nature. A wise statesman, though he may neither understand nor sympathize with it, is chary of thwarting it. He knows that its tumultuous energies may work in revolutionary and incalculable ways. The politician may seek to dam it, but the stream will have its way and sweep him down the roaring

cataract to political perdition. It is so strong a passion that at times it casts out every other. Think how in the fierce flame of it the Arab tribes felt the old feuds that sundered them shrivel, and were fused at the touch of Mohammed's preaching into a mighty host of brothers in the faith. Partly, however, hostility to change arises because religion was, in antiquity and is to-day among savages, so intimately connected with material prosperity. The fertility of the soil, the harvest and vintage, the increase and well-being of flocks and herds, were held to depend on the correct performance of the traditional religious ceremonies. An alteration in the ritual might bring a drought to parch the land or a pestilence to carry off the cattle. With the grim spectres of famine and plague before them, they were in no mood to treat reform in religion as a matter to be amiably discussed at a Round-table Conference. It was indeed "a short way with Dissenters" then.

The civilization of the Roman Empire was no doubt immeasurably removed from the crude conditions of a savage tribe. There was also among the educated and ruling classes considerable scepticism as to the old religion. But there was great fervour, sometimes passing into fanaticism, for the worship of the Emperor. Religion and patriotism were closely entwined. To abstain from practice of the cult was to refuse to enlist on behalf of the country whatever forces the act of worship might liberate or enhance. Should we, then, think it just that the early Christians should be charged

with basely accepting all the benefits which Rome offered while they refused this primary requirement? Would they not have pleaded in reply that they could not help themselves, that they prayed for Empire and Emperor and wished them well, but this one thing they could not do? So, too, a conscientious objector may say, "I love my country, and would serve it with all my power, but the form of service you demand it is not possible for me to render."

V

I PASS on to another point in the indictment against the objectors. This is the gross injustice that they should remain in safety while others are exposed to all the horrors of modern warfare. The bitterness of tone in which resentment is expressed is perhaps not surprising. No one would willingly, I trust, treat lightly the feeling of a mother whose son had been caught and mangled in the military machine. But we must not allow our deep and genuine sympathy to deflect our sense of right and wrong. Nor must our pre-occupation with a single objectionable class cause us to forget that the problem is not so narrow. I do not labour the point that all women are by immemorial usage and common consent excluded from the Army. An extremely small proportion is ever brought into perilous contact with battle. Nor do I dwell on the exemption granted to the old and the young. But it is worth while touching on the fact that it is only within fixed limits of age that men are called upon to fight. In the nature of the case the determination of the limits must be arbitrary. For the transition from military fitness to military unfitness is not sharp and sudden, but passes through infinitesimal gradations.

tions. A man is practically as fit at forty-two as he is at forty-one. Some men are more fit at fifty than others at thirty-five. An arbitrary age limit is probably inevitable once conscription is introduced ; but the relatives of the man who falls just below the age of exemption may not unnaturally feel aggrieved at the escape of the man who is just on the right side of the line. And a conscript is not without excuse for his indignation at men who do nothing to show their patriotism except by sending others to go and fight for them. What is the solid value of a patriotism when the patriot feels all the glow and emotion, while the burden and sacrifice are transferred to another ?

But the inequality does become more serious when we consider simply the men of military age. It is unavoidable that many men of military age should remain in exempted occupations. These earn large wages and are shielded from risk, while others have doled out to them a soldier's pay and are exposed to the privations and perils of a soldier's life. Even among the soldiers themselves there is great disparity ; some are in sheltered positions, and know little or nothing of the hardships and suffering of the trenches or the seas. For some enlistment has meant financial ruin, while their business rivals, it may be, have unmolested heaped a fortune together. It must also in fairness be recognized that multitudes are in the Army through no choice of their own. They came in either under conscription, or because coming events cast their shadow before, and they

preferred not to wait till conscription overtook them. These are hardly in a position to throw stones at the conscientious objectors, for they are in the Army by compulsion, direct or indirect. Indeed, in many instances it would probably be correct to say that, had the conscientious objector regarded war as legitimate, his conscience would have impelled him to volunteer long before conscription was in sight. But he refuses military service, not because he is a shirker or a coward, or because he has no love for his country or sympathizes with German methods and ideas, but for the simple and all-sufficient reason that his conscience absolutely forbids him to participate in war. But for that imperious conviction many, I doubt not, would sooner go than stay. To stay requires a moral courage far rarer and intrinsically more precious than physical courage can be.

VI

So far I have been dealing with popular and instinctive judgment; but there are those who challenge the claim of the individual conscience to receive the consideration which I have assumed as its right. They feel that our individualism has become a fetish. We prate too glibly about freedom, but grow restive at the touch of authority. The collective conscience, it is urged, may rightly override the individual, and the individual ought to sacrifice his own judgment and prefer the conviction of the community to his own, especially if he is immature. I do not propose to enter on a discussion of ethical theory, but a few considerations may not be out of place. In the first place, there is no such thing as a collective judgment on this matter. No doubt there is a very large body of opinion which recognizes that war may be right. There is also not quite so large, but still a very large, consensus that this particular war is right. But there is an influential and intellectually and morally reputable minority which insists that all war is wrong, while there are some who hold that this particular war is wrong. A man may therefore be acquitted of presumption if he maintains his own position in company with

this minority. In the next place history has again and again shown that majorities, especially when they occupy old-established positions, are wrong and that the minority has the future with it. We can hardly overrate the prestige of antiquity and commonly accepted opinion or the mental and spiritual inertia of the average man. It so happens that the taunt of immaturity has a specious justification in the youthfulness of many who urge the plea of conscience. That is inevitable because the old send the young to fight. But it must never be forgotten that this is a mere accident inherent in the present situation. For so far from the ranks of the pacifists being made up of those who put forward the excuse simply to evade military service, there are very many pacifists whose position is entirely secure. They number many women among them, many men past military age, many in exempted occupations. They include not a few whose pacifism was known and respected long before war came upon us. These are not youthful idealists who may fittingly be told to tarry at Jericho till their beards be grown, or whose right to a conscience can plausibly be challenged. And truly I should not wish to commit myself to an argument which might lead me to belittle the obedience to conscience shown by those who at its behest have followed the call of duty to battle and to death. If we so lightly dismiss the youthful conscience in the one case, with what consistency can we give it due praise in the other?

But I beg our friends to beware how they cheapen conscience. If we teach the youth of this country that conscience may be lightly set aside in deference to the general drift of opinion, we need not be surprised if with the thoroughness and logical consistency of youth they push our teaching to conclusions at which we shall stand aghast. No extemporized ethics to deal with an inconvenient situation will offer us a stable foundation for the morality of the future. Far better suffer all the inconvenience of rigid regard to conscience than weaken its sanctity or relax its imperious authority. The man who utters a sneer at conscience is fooling with moral explosives. God alone can measure the havoc which such irresponsibility may occasion. Nor, indeed, should any one ever permit himself to criticize the conscientious objector without making it absolutely clear that for him also conscience is invested with inviolable sanctity and unchallenged authority. Only too readily does the adventurous spirit chafe at the curb and cast off restraint; it is not for us to encourage contempt of the inner voice or the quenching of the inner light.

Of course, I am not asserting any infallibility for conscience. In its decisions there is an intellectual as well as a moral element. For while conscience makes no error in its inexorable demand that a man shall follow the right, men of equal sincerity will often differ in their decision as to what the right course is. Conscience may be weak and morbid, it may be healthy and robust. But

the strong must show tender regard for the timid scruples of the weak and abstain from contempt, while the weak should as punctiliously resist their besetting temptation to pass censorious judgment on the conduct of the strong. And each, indeed, should be led by the attitude of the other to scrutinize afresh his own position. The man who glories in his freedom, and breaks through what he regards as irrational taboos, should with patient self-examination search his motives to their root and ponder the question whether the fences he has broken down were not a real safeguard against evil ways. And he whose danger it is to coddle all manner of scrupulosities should let the light and the air into his conscience and live in that spacious freedom for which Christ has set us free. We have yet a long way to travel before agreement is reached even on principles ; and when we are agreed on principles there will for long be ample room for diversity of judgment as to their correct application. Meanwhile, each of us has two duties —to illuminate his conscience and then to obey it. But all the uncertainties and perplexities in which our whole subject is involved, while they may justify a grave warning as to the possibility of error in our conclusions and emphasize the solemn responsibility of leaving no avenue of illumination closed, curtail in no measure the sovereign right of conscience to unhesitating and unflinching obedience. And they forcibly remind us how wrong intolerance must be.

And yet it will be said : Are you not running

the risk of a moral anarchism? For if the individual conscience is so highly exalted, will you not be plunged into chaos rather than have that social unity which is essential to the well-being of the State? I reply that we must not allow ourselves to be intimidated from assertion of our principles by undue regard for theoretical deductions. If the principles are true, we must assert them and take the risks. Truth, as well as error, may have its dangers, but I do not linger over the preposterous question to whose account the greater peril should be put down. But the danger which attaches to the truth is not properly to be put down to its account at all. It arises from its operation in wrong and uncongenial conditions. And are the practical consequences likely to be such as to justify this theoretical inference? Surely there is moral chaos enough at present, and I cannot believe that the road to order is to be found along the path of flouting the individual conscience, training the young to distrust it and disregard its behests, and bringing all kinds of physical, social, and moral pressure to force men to violate their inmost convictions. Should we be wrong if we were to say that Jesus counted among cardinal sins the sin of forcing others to act against their conscience? At least, the solemn words He spoke as to the gravity of this offence are calculated to make those who perpetrate it quail with fearful expectation of judgment to come.

Yet it may be asked, What would have become of us if we had all been pacifists? Were we calmly

to allow the Germans to work their will upon us, to take our land, reduce the men to slavery, the women to slavery and dishonour, and doom the little children to torture? It is not quite easy to say what would have happened in such barely imaginable conditions. It is in truth inconceivable that England should have turned pacifist. If pacifist principles should ever prevail they are not likely to come in such a way that the British race accepts the principles of non-resistance while other nations remain untouched. And, of course, had this condition of things actually existed we could not have been involved in war. The Continental war would have gone on without our help, and Germany would presumably have had a fairly quick triumph. Quite possibly she would have gone on to annex the British Empire, if under pacifist principles such an institution had not spontaneously dissolved. I will not say that liberty and honour would in those circumstances have been safe any more than liberty and honour are secured to the victims of slavery. But German atrocities, diabolical as they are, are for the most part an element of the military system; though, of course, to deliberate atrocity, designed to cow resistance or punish it where it has been offered, we must add such infamies as have their source in drunkenness and lust. At the same time, it is hardly likely that even Germany would have wantonly committed outrage on a very large pacifist population whose loyalty to its principles it might have seemed dangerous to test too far.

But really this is another of those theoretical conundrums that are wholly irrelevant to the actual situation. Never at any time was there the slightest reason to believe that the refusal of pacifists to fight was other than a quite negligible factor in the situation. Nay, the presence of such men in the Army is a positive weakness to it. The military system cannot assimilate them, and they are centres of infection. Their principles may spread, the lack of heart they must have in the business of slaughter may easily prove contagious. And many of us who are not pacifists are depressed and discouraged by the action of the authorities, and the unity so essential in our great struggle is wantonly sacrificed.

VII

So far I have been concerned with the indictment drawn up against the conscientious objectors. My next duty is to say something in explanation of their position. Not a little has already been said which it is unnecessary to repeat. But some further points must be added, especially as to the views of the extremists with whom I am chiefly concerned. I begin with a consideration which, though not central, has a measure of weight with them. They argue that if all the forces of the country are organized for war, help given to the country is given to the war. Stated in this extreme form, the argument exhibits, as Professor Murray says, more logic than common sense; and it seems to me obvious and elementary that questions of this kind cannot be settled by mere logic. But, when stated in a less extreme form, there is real substance in it. Undeniably there is considerable force in the contention that the object of much alternative service which has been offered is to assist the country in the prosecution of the war. I touched on this point before, when I discussed what was meant by "helping the country," so I will content myself with quoting Mrs. Hobhouse's statement of their plea: "These men argue,

rightly or wrongly, that when they are ordered under the Military Service Acts to change their occupations—for example, to engage in agriculture instead of teaching—the purpose of the change is the better organization of the nation's resources for purposes of war. They contend that the result of their engaging in agriculture will not be to increase the amount of the nation's food production, but merely to enable the authorities to send a larger number of agricultural labourers into the Army. Accordingly, they maintain that what is called work of national importance, even when it has no direct association with the prosecution of the war, is really ancillary to military service, just as much as is the work of the Non-Combatant Corps. They point out that, if this were not the case, there would have been no reason to ask them to abandon occupations which had been recognized as useful in times of peace."

But their fundamental objection to any compromise in this matter is their conviction that they have just the same kind of right to abstain from war as the early Christians had to abstain from the worship of Cæsar. This right they will not tacitly deny by bargaining for it. They will be permitted to abstain if they will accept the conditions imposed by the Military Service Acts. They will not by such an act of barter forfeit an inalienable right and accept a privilege in its place. They deny the right of the State to require any participation in war, direct or indirect. They refuse to recognize or obey any court which demands

of them such apostasy from their higher allegiance. The creation of a tribunal designed to force men into inflicting on their fellows death and the agony of wounds is to them an outrage on the moral law, a sin against the first principles of humanity. They cannot recognize its right to intrude into the realm where it exercises its power, nor will they consent to purchase their exemption by obedience to its commands. In several cases the tribunals have been willing to offer as an alternative what, left to his own free will, the objector would himself have chosen. The man in the street will feel that in such cases refusal is unreasonable. From our standpoint it is unreasonable in the last degree; but, granting the objector's point of view, the practical inference may be plausibly held to follow. We are all prepared to fight with the utmost tenacity over the merest trifle, if we feel that a question of principle is involved. The present case is one of moral punctilio; but punctilios, and those not necessarily moral, have been responsible for many a duel and brought nations to the brink of war. Professor Murray aptly quotes a parallel from the early history of the Friends: "Think of the Quakers in the time of the Commonwealth and of Charles II., sentenced again and again to imprisonment because they thought it an act of idolatry to take off their hats in court." Sensible people nowadays would say at once that if the Quakers were ridden by such childish scruples as to turn a bit of etiquette into an act of idolatry we must just respect their scruples and let them go their own way. We

marvel at the sheer stupidity which treated such a refusal as a criminal offence.

A further point, that I might touch upon here, is relevant rather to the case of those who would not be unwilling to accept such military service as was of a purely humanitarian type. If a man believes that the main business of war is wholly illegitimate, he might still without inconsistency join the R.A.M.C., provided he could be assured that his work would be wholly remedial. But such an avenue of service, which may well be dangerous service, is closed, for the military authorities have the power, and I understand that they have exercised it, to draft men from the R.A.M.C. into the fighting forces. And for him to plead that his religion requires him to follow his Master, who came to save men's lives and not to destroy them, will avail him nothing. I have before me the "Manual of Military Law" and quote the regulation on p. 18, a regulation repeated in substance on p. 388: "Religious scruples, however *bona fide* they may be, afford no justification for neglect or refusal to obey orders. An officer cannot (for example) plead conscientious scruples as justifying a refusal to go into the trenches on a Sunday, or to pay marks of respect enjoined by superior authority to a religion different from his own." In this connexion I touch on a further point which comes out in the case of Mr. Catchpool. A Quaker from childhood, he left his profession on the outbreak of war, and qualified for Red Cross work. He went to Flanders with the Friends'

Ambulance Unit. He worked on the battle-field and went to Ypres when the fate of Flanders still hung in the balance. He little expected to return, but wished to serve for a few weeks, if it might be, in saving life. He was spared for nineteen months for this work at the Front. When conscription came he felt that his position became impossible. Men who stood for the same ideals as himself were reviled as cowards and shirkers. When some were sent to France and became liable to the death penalty he felt he could hesitate no longer. He took his stand with them, made public profession of his faith, and accepted the consequences. He could have obtained exemption if he had continued his ambulance work. "But," he says, "I am enlisted in the highest service I know, the formation of a world-fellowship of men prepared to die rather than take part in war, and the foundations of such fellowship, which is already spreading from country to country, cannot rest upon compromise." Being refused the absolute exemption provided by the Act, he has served a sentence of a hundred and twelve days' hard labour, and is now in prison sentenced to two years' hard labour, with recommendation to mercy in view of his ambulance work at the Front.

I make these statements about him to indicate the kind of man he is, but the point which I specially wish to bring out lies in the following sentence : " I was baffled more and more by the consciousness that, under military control, the primary object of our work was the refitting of men to take their

place again in the trenches." I find it peculiarly difficult to sympathize with this perplexity, because it seems to me that the duty of relieving the suffering is a primary obligation which overrides all scruples that may be felt as to the destiny which awaits them when healed. One's instinctive, uncalculating desire to succour distress ought, I think, to be followed without hesitation. Nevertheless I recognize that from the writer's point of view it is not without force, and as this is a point in the case I have thought it right to mention it.

As representing the position of those who have felt it possible to accept the Home Office scheme, I quote two paragraphs from a letter I have received from a Work Centre. The writer, with whom I am not personally acquainted, thinks there are two points which ought to be borne in mind in considering the matter: "The first is that the vast majority of Christian pacifists are actuated in their refusal to fight, not by any *blind* obedience to the teaching of Jesus, but by the conviction that this teaching is the only rational and practical expedient in the world of to-day. Our attitude is not merely negative or liberal, but the outcome of our belief that loyalty to the Kingdom of God is not only not incompatible with a deep love of country, but that the highest interests of one's country can be best and only served by this primary allegiance. If we seek first the Kingdom of God all these things will be added as a necessary corollary. On the other hand, war is a *cul-de-sac*, a vicious circle and a stimulant of the very evils

it sets out to remove. The second point is that the actual waging of war is very different from the abstract reasoning that seeks, in the quiet of the study, to establish that war is justifiable as a principle. The logic of a false reason and consistency may sometimes drive us to condone what we would rather die than perform; and this is why it may be possible for a non-combatant to retain his Christian ideals, while the combatant is so sickened and nauseated by the unspeakable *deeds* he is forced to do that his ideals are hopelessly shattered and his life becomes a nightmare."

VIII

I PASS on now to the legal position. There can be no question that it was the intention of the Government which carried conscription through Parliament to provide for the case of conscientious objectors in such a way that had their purpose been carried out the present scandals would never have arisen. It was with this explicit understanding that conscription was accepted, and unquestionably the opposition to it would have been not a little intensified but for the Government pledges and the safeguards of the Act. On this point I will quote the statements of a member of the House of Lords and a member of the House of Commons, neither of whom can be suspected of sentimentalism or sympathy with violation of the law. The Right Hon. Lord Parmoor has written as follows : "It is a fundamental principle that punishment should be imposed in reference to the nature of the offence. Judged by this standard, there is no justification for the terms of successive imprisonment inflicted on conscientious objectors who are recognized to be straightforward and sincere. This punishment is, moreover, contrary to the express declarations of responsible Ministers when the Military Service Act was under

debate in Parliament." Lord Henry Bentinck, M.P., says : " While I have not much sympathy with the ordinary conscientious objector, I feel that our treatment of those who have proved their sincerity by going to prison is consistent neither with humanity nor the law. The Military Service Act lays down that ' the Tribunal, if they consider the ground for the application established, shall grant a certificate of exemption, which may be either absolute, conditional, or temporary. It is beyond dispute that when the House was passing the Military Service Acts it was intended to give absolute exemption to those whose objection to military service was beyond any question.' At the time when the Military Service Act was under consideration Mr. Herbert Samuel was Home Secretary. Speaking on behalf of the conscience clause, and of course as a responsible member of the Government, he used the following words in the House of Commons on January 19, 1916 : " Are you, in the case of these conscientious objectors, to arrest them and bring them before the Court, and impose fines, and, if the fines are not paid, proceed to imprison them ? Is it really contemplated that now, when for the first time you are making military service compulsory in this country, it should be accompanied by the arrest and imprisonment of a certain number of men who unquestionably, by common consent, are men of the highest character, and, in other matters, good citizens ? I am sure Honourable Members would not wish to contemplate that

there should be anything in the nature of religious persecution, or that you should have this body of men locked up in the gaols of this country." What Mr. Samuel, speaking for the Government, treated as a policy which Parliament would assuredly repudiate, has not only been pursued with drastic severity in the case of large numbers of men who are all Mr. Samuel declared them to be, but it has been done by Courts appointed to carry out the Government's intentions, and with the indolent acquiescence or even the heated approval of those who in earlier days were counted the inflexible friends of justice and freedom.

Since, however, expressions of opinion by Members of Parliament, however competent and eminent, or the speeches of members of the Government are not statutes of the realm, I quote the relevant clauses in the two Military Service Acts. In the Act of January 27, 1916, the clause runs as follows : " Any certificate of exemption may be absolute, conditional, or temporary, as the authority by whom it was granted think best suited to the case and also, in the case of an application on conscientious grounds, may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work which in the opinion of the Tribunal dealing with the case is of national importance." There is no ambiguity in this clause. The general rule is placed first, and it embraces all cases, including those due to conscientious objection. Accordingly the Tribunals had the power to grant

absolute exemption to conscientious objectors. But an additional provision was made in their case indicating two lines of treatment which might be followed. Inasmuch, however, as some ambiguity was discovered in it, the case was made quite clear when the second Act was passed (May 25, 1916). The clause runs as follows: "It is hereby declared that the power to grant special certificates of exemption in the case of an application on conscientious grounds under Sub-section (3) of Section 2 of the principal Act is additional to and not in derogation of the general power conferred by that Act to grant an absolute, conditional, or temporary certificate in such cases." I have never had the slightest suspicion as to the good faith of the Government. I do not for one moment believe that it was getting its Acts passed under false pretences. It faced the actual situation, it recognized that an insuperable objection on grounds of conscience might be held by men of high character and loyal citizenship. It knew that these men might push their objection to an extreme point, and therefore deliberately made provision for absolute exemption in such cases.

In this connexion I revert to a point that I have already mentioned. Even very unsympathetic opponents of the conscientious objectors could not shut their eyes to the patent fact that there were religious bodies in the country, notably the Society of Friends, whose principles forbade and had always forbidden any participation in war. Accordingly some, realizing the infamy involved

in forcing their conscience, suggested that exemption should be granted only to those who were members of certain religious denominations. Speaking as a Free Churchman, I need not argue with any Free Churchman who understands his principles and has not abandoned them, that such a limitation would have been altogether unacceptable. Religious tests of every kind in civil life are hateful to us. And to us it is simply grotesque to deny the privilege of a conscience in this matter to all except Friends, Christadelphians, Plymouth Brethren, and whatever other bodies there may be that make the unlawfulness of war an article of faith. I return to the matter because the United States has a clause in its Act on this point. I can speak the more freely that I have no recantations to make now that America has come into the war. I believed all along in President Wilson, and constantly defended him against criticism. I thought the attacks on him were not only ungenerous, since they made no adequate allowance for the colossal difficulties of his position, but as directed against the head of a great, proud, and sensitive people then moving towards its decision were highly impolitic. The American Act embodied the following clause : "And nothing in this Act contained shall be construed to require or compel any person to serve in any of the forces herein provided for if found to be a member of any well-organized religious sect or organization, at present organized and existing, whose creed forbids its members to participate in war in any form, and whose

religious convictions are against war or participation therein in accordance with the creed of the said religious organization." While this clause is from my point of view open to the objections I have urged, I would nevertheless commend it to the consideration of those who hold up America as our model in the treatment of conscientious objectors. Of the men in prison at the present time in Great Britain reports have been given as to the religion of 307. Of these 105 belong to the Society of Friends, three times the number of the denomination which comes next on the list. All of these men would have been legally entitled, had the provisions of the American Act been operative here, to absolute exemption. Probably a considerable number would have refused to accept it, on the ground that they could not avail themselves of a privilege withheld from others, whose objection was as sincere as their own. This does not alter the fact that legally their title to absolute exemption would have been clear.

The task of deciding on the appeals made by conscientious objectors was entrusted to Tribunals specially constituted for the purpose. Unfortunately the Tribunals were not equal to the task. The work of discriminating between genuine and spurious objection on the ground of conscience and giving a just decision required rather rare qualifications—a judicial mind and robust common sense, of course, but also a nimble and flexible intellect, a sympathetic insight into strange opinions, a just appreciation of uncongenial points of view,

some grasp of ethical theory, some knowledge of historical precedent. It would have been idle to expect the members of the local Tribunals to exhibit such a constellation of qualities, and the responsibility of failure does not entirely attach to them. In certain cases they were unquestionably wrongly advised. Mrs. Hobhouse gives instances where Tribunals have held that they did not possess the power to grant absolute exemption to conscientious objectors, in plain defiance of the terms of the Act. Moreover, Mr. Long, when President of the Local Government Board, issued a circular in which the following paragraph occurs : " Absolute exemption can be granted in all cases where conditional exemption will not adequately meet the case. It is quite clear that if the condition imposed is an impossible one it does not meet the case so far as exemption is concerned."

The recent House of Lords debate fully establishes the fact that Tribunals did act on the principle that to grant absolute exemption was beyond their power. The Marquess of Salisbury, who minimized the importance of this point, admitted the misapprehension, adding : " I think those Tribunals who made the mistake were exceedingly silly." It is a rather frank admission of their incompetence, and it is distressing to think that men may be in prison owing to a misapprehension, on the more charitable interpretation, of " exceedingly silly " Tribunals.

We have seen, then, that the intentions of the

Government in constituting Tribunals were not actually carried out. Mr. Asquith, who was at the time Prime Minister, said : " All men whose objections to active military service are founded on honest convictions ought to be able, and will be able, to avail themselves of the exemptions which Parliament has provided." Lord Kitchener said : " The genuine conscientious objectors will find themselves under the civil power." Mr. Long in the House of Commons said : " I do not want, and nobody in the Government wants, the horror of men who for conscience' sake are unwilling to serve being thrown into gaol for a long time." It would have seemed beforehand as if the tangle in which the whole matter is now involved would be impossible. The safeguards were honestly intended, and they appeared adequate. The Acts were explicit, the parliamentary utterances of ministers left no doubt as to how they should be interpreted. Instructions were also issued by circular from the Local Government Board. I am reluctant in view of all this to blame the Government ; and certainly had its provisions been honourably carried out, little, if any, trouble need have arisen. But, as I have already pointed out, the proper discharge of the duty imposed on the bodies appointed to deal with these cases was beyond their competence. But this was not all. A study of the reports of their proceedings was in some cases very disheartening. I am well aware that some conscientious objectors made a bad impression on members of Tribunals who were really

anxious to see justice done. I may add that if any one cares to read some of the early Acts of Christian martyrs written by Christians he will get a bad impression of the conduct of some of them in the courts of law. But he will not consider, I hope, that Christianity itself is discredited by the unsatisfactory demeanour of some of its champions. But this goes a very little way to account for the attitude of many Tribunals. Many of their members were themselves affected with the Prussian spirit. They meant to stand no nonsense about conscience from slackers and fanatics. When the utterances of ministers in the House of Commons were brought to their attention they were brushed aside with the off-hand remarks about Parliament with which the steadfast foes of our liberties have for some time been nauseating us. There was the steady pressure for men, fit or unfit. Then one can gain a cheap reputation for patriotism by staying at home and ruthlessly sending other men to fight.

I have already explained that the Tribunals were most unwilling to give total exemption. Nor could they be easily induced to grant exemption on the condition that non-military national service was performed. In cases where the objection was held to be genuine they constantly gave non-combatant military service. I need not go over the ground once more and explain how completely this failed to meet the case. Indeed, nothing can well exhibit more clearly the unfitness of the courts for the work entrusted to them than the fact that

the certain failure of such a solution was not seen at a glance.

The direct result of this policy was that the Tribunals gave the lie to Lord Kitchener. His pledge that the objectors would find themselves under the civil power was set at naught. The Tribunals threw the men into the military machine. This gave the military authorities their opportunity of effecting conversions. They sincerely believed that when they got the objectors in their clutches they would soon knock or wheedle that nonsense about conscience out of them. Some believed that the German method of shooting objectors was best adapted to attain their end. Professor Murray says : " I have notes of conversations with two military authorities, one in a high position, one only a recruiting officer, who had a definite intention of shooting the objectors. ' A few would do, just to bring the others to reason.' I endeavoured to explain that this view was too sanguine, but both men clung to it. The plan has, I believe, never been carried out. Disobedient objectors have been taken to France, avowedly for the purpose of enabling their officers to shoot them at will. They have been threatened with shooting, and have been formally sentenced to death. But they have not been actually shot. The special grace guaranteed them by the law has only taken the form of cells, field punishment, penal servitude, and repeated terms of hard labour." One can only wonder at the ignorance alike of psychology and of history which is blind to the futility of

persecution. The early experience of Christians was soon expressed in the maxim which we have never forgotten, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." In his "New America" Hepworth Dixon gives an account of his interview with a leader of one of the communistic sects in the United States. Though it is many years since I read the book, I have not forgotten the impression made by one passage in it. The sect had gone through great tribulation, and, as the student of history would anticipate, was all the stronger for its fiery trials. The leader explained to Hepworth Dixon that the common view that persecution deterred men from joining a movement was quite untrue. "They fly into it, as moths into a flame."

It is notorious, however, that a great amount of bullying and terrorism was brought to bear on the objectors who had thus, contrary to the pledges of the Government, come under military control. This, of course, was wholly irregular. I must apologize for quoting so much from Professor Murray at this point, but he not only expresses things much better than I can, he is giving here first-hand evidence. He says: "I should like, however, to state clearly that, as far as my own experience goes, which was confined practically to the year 1916, the Government and the higher authorities were most prompt in redressing any case of proved injustice that was brought to them and sincerely anxious to prevent wrong being done. And, secondly, as far as my experience

goes, cruelty in the barracks was the exception, an embarrassed and worried good nature was the rule. The ordinary cases of oppression, unfairness, and bullying in the barracks were probably not due to any high authorities, but sprang from excesses of popular feeling, or from sheer ill-temper and stupidity." In other cases, however, these irregular methods were deliberately adopted. I quote Professor Murray once more: "'He won't give way?' said a recruiting officer to me about a certain rather delicate undergraduate. 'Well, we'll see when we get him in the barracks. It's him against us, and I think we shall get the best of it.' 'Do you want to shoot him?' I asked. 'No, we won't shoot him. We'll spank him. We'll make him wish he had never been born.'" Such was the intention; as to the result of this kind of treatment I add another quotation. "I have received by this morning's post (June 30th) the accounts of one man, an intended missionary, dead in hospital, another dead in a lunatic asylum as the result of this secret bullying."

I am writing for Christian people, and I beg of them to consider what this pressure really means. It means that a deliberate attempt is made to force a man to act in violation of his own conscience. He is to be made to do what he feels to be wrong, to commit high treason against his Divine Master. The bully is justly despised, even if we excuse the schoolboy because of his thoughtlessness and his defect of sympathetic imagination. But the bullying of which I have spoken is flagrant and

inexcusable. It belongs to that class of sin which Jesus condemned with such sternness and severity, and of which He said that a man had better have a millstone tied around his neck and he be cast into the depths of the sea than be guilty of it. I do not know that I have ever read a more pathetic letter than one written by an objector who had yielded to the pressure, because he could no longer stand out under the intolerable strain. He had suffered much, but he would not excuse himself for what he felt to be his apostasy. His letter was filled with self-contempt and self-reproach. Mark Rutherford gave us a beautiful new Beatitude, "Blessed are they who heal us of self-despisings." But what of those who inflict these wounds upon the soul?

I pass from this painful subject because I am specially concerned with the case of those who are at present in prison. Owing to the lack of uniformity as between different Tribunals the incidence of penalty has been most unjust. There can be no question that a large number of the men in prison ought to have received absolute exemption if it was granted to any. Now, absolute exemption has been granted in some 400 cases. It is obviously unfair that a man's fate should be determined by such a caprice of fortune. Some of the victims, I have already pointed out, would have received total exemption but for the misapprehensions under which the Tribunals acted. Others would have received it had they been before different Tribunals. It may not be possible to avoid

individual hardships, but a general equality of treatment we have a right to expect. But worse still than the miscarriage of justice in the first instance is the discreditable sequel.

IX

ONE of my favourite books is Samuel Butler's "Erewhon," with its sequel, "Erewhon Revisited." And I am reminded, as I contemplate our present situation, of the famous chapter on the machines. Apart from the brilliant satire on our social and religious conventions, Butler also wove into his story some of the ideas which found expression in his scientific writings. He tells us that the Erewhonians, with their topsy-turvy notions, had become convinced, owing to the immense strides made in mechanical invention, that in the process of evolution the machinery, becoming all the time more skilful, more powerful and efficient, more exquisitely adjusted to perform its tasks, might get the better of its inventors and masters and make them its slaves. All machinery was accordingly suppressed. I am irresistibly reminded of "Erewhon" when I contemplate the Satanic ingenuity with which the machine for dealing with conscientious objectors works. It does not seem to have been deliberately planned to work this way, but in the process of unconscious evolution it has developed unanticipated powers, so that even the Government's own action would in some cases be nullified by it. It crushes beneath

its weight the immemorial principles of English justice. There is no principle of English Law that we should have regarded as more unquestioned than that a man should be liberated when he had served his sentence. His offence may be manslaughter, highway robbery, burglary, theft, forgery, embezzlement, assault; his sentence may be long or short, severe or light. But it would never occur to any one that when a man has served his sentence he should be released, re-arrested, tried and sentenced, and serve a second term. Still more monstrous would it seem if this process should be repeated again and again. Yet this is how our machine has worked in this instance. When an objector has served his sentence he has had to face another court martial, and has been sent to prison to serve a fresh sentence. Now, technically it is true that the new term of imprisonment is inflicted for a new offence; but only a sophist would attempt to justify such treatment. Indeed, it would require no little impudence to argue that the man is really guilty of a fresh offence. His offence is just his refusal to be a soldier, or to put himself in any way under military command. If it is right to sentence such a man to imprisonment at all and even to give him a severe sentence, at least in the name of common sense, to say nothing of fair play, which, as a nation, we are commonly held to prize, let us stop this grotesque and wicked parody of justice and allow the serving of one sentence to purge what is in truth only one offence.

What greatly aggravates the severity of this treatment is the disproportionate intensity which it involves. This operates in two ways. The harshest treatment comes at the beginning. Where a prisoner is placed in the third division with hard labour—and to this category almost all the conscientious objectors in prison belong—he is kept in separate confinement in his cell for twenty-eight days, seeing no one but the warder and the chaplain occasionally. For fourteen days he sleeps without a mattress, unless the medical officer orders otherwise. For two months he may not write or receive any letter, nor may any one visit him. The only relaxation is a letter on the death of a relative or for urgent business reasons. Prison conditions in Scotland are worse than in England. There is a gradual amelioration of conditions after the periods I have mentioned have been completed. It has been customary with the conscientious objectors to reduce their sentence. This might strike the superficial observer as a merciful concession. Really, of course, it operates in quite the other direction. For release is only a mockery. He is re-arrested, court-martialled, and sentenced again. If he were a real criminal, he would be set free—in some instances, of course, on ticket-of-leave. If he got into prison again it would be because he had committed an entirely fresh crime. But the conscientious objector has not the advantage of being a criminal, so he goes back to prison; and the meaning of this is that the harshest part of his

imprisonment has to be suffered over and over again. The burglar who is sentenced to two years' hard labour can at least count on having a mattress to sleep on after a fortnight, and to escape for two hours or more daily from his cell and its unbearable solitude when he has served for twenty-eight days. After two months he may write one letter and receive one visit from three relatives or friends, and, subject to his good behaviour, the severity of his treatment is gradually relaxed till he reaches the end of his time. But the conscientious objector may serve half a dozen short sentences within that time, which means that, while the burglar goes without his mattress for fourteen days, the objector may go without for eighty-four in the aggregate. And, similarly, the periods of solitary confinement will for the burglar be twenty-eight days and for the objector twenty-four weeks. And while the burglar must wait two months for a visit or a letter, the objector would have to be without for half his time. That this is no exaggeration may be seen from the fact that when the House of Lords debate took place men were already suffering a fifth term of imprisonment with hard labour. I should add that on June 27, 1917, Mr. Forster announced a change of policy. No more remission was to be allowed. This will in some instances raise the objector to the privileged position of the burglar; in other words, if a man is sentenced to two years' hard labour he will serve his time without having to do the harshest part of it over and over again,

But if he is sentenced to a much shorter period, let us say 112 days, there is nothing to prevent the ghastly travesty of justice which I have described from going on.

The second way in which the repetition of imprisonment acts, is that the nature of the sentence becomes much more severe. The intensity of punishment varies as a rule with its duration. Two years' hard labour is regarded by those who know as one of the severest inflicted by English law. The reason is that where a longer sentence has to be served it is necessary to dilute its severity because the human frame is not calculated to stand punishment to that pitch of intensity for much more than two years.

As this is probably not widely known I quote again from the House of Lords debate. Lord Parmoor said : " You will know that the maximum term of imprisonment which our law recognizes is two years; this is the maximum amount, the reason being that it is the maximum term which you can possibly impose without permanently enfeebling either the mind or the body of the person punished. Of course, I am not talking about penal servitude; that is a different matter. I have no doubt many of your lordships in different times, especially under the old county system, have been visitors to our gaols. If you have I am sure the conviction will have been brought home to you that anything beyond this maximum term is nothing less than torture to the person upon whom it is inflicted." In the same debate

the Marquess of Crewe, referring to the expectation that after sentence had been pronounced the Army would have nothing more to do with the objector, proceeded : "That expectation has not been fulfilled, because he becomes a soldier over and over again ; he is then tried by court martial, and receives a military sentence of two years' imprisonment with hard labour, which, as we all know, is the most severe sentence in itself that can be inflicted in a Court of Law. I am inclined to think that most people conversant with the practice of the courts and with prison rules would tell you that almost any criminal would sooner receive five years' penal servitude than two years' imprisonment with hard labour." Now, the objector does not get the benefit of the law by which severity diminishes as length of term increases. If he had had the worldly wisdom to forge a cheque, to be guilty of embezzlement or highway robbery, he might have received two years or he might have received five. In the one case he could have consoled himself with the thought that it would be terribly severe while it lasted, but that he would be out again much sooner ; in the other case with the thought that, though the term was longer, the intensity of the punishment would be much less severe. But since, after long and unselfish-service for his country, he has been true to his convictions, he looks forward to indefinite renewal of sentence and punishment of maximum degree. It is a kind of justice that before the war would have seemed too farcical for anything but a comic

opera. And so the fair name of England as the land of freedom, where right is established and impartial law is impartially administered, is sadly smirched.

But what I have called the Satanic ingenuity of the machine is exhibited, perhaps, most strikingly in that it would nullify the action of the Home Secretary himself if he should see reason to intervene. For if an objector were to be released by order of the Home Secretary he would be at once court-martialled and returned to prison. Hitherto we have been under the impression that we had a valuable safeguard in this prerogative of the Home Secretary. But the cleverness of the machine is such that it checkmates even the Home Secretary.

But people will shrug their shoulders and decline to be moved with pity or indignation. Granted that the machine acts harshly, and indeed unfairly, yet in a gigantic war much injustice is bound to occur, and the conscientious objectors are not the only victims.

Yes, as the son of Thetis said,
I hear thee saying now,
"Greater by far than thou are dead,
Strive not, die also thou."

That all sorts of injustice and inequality are inseparable from war is only too true ; but one wrong does not make another wrong more tolerable, especially when it can be readily set right. And if it be said that prison may be bad but the trenches

are worse, I reply that even if this is true it completely misses the point. People who say this are apparently not aware that the alternative before these men is not prison or the trenches. They have not chosen the softer option, but the harder, for they might have gone to the Home Office work centres. Now, a work centre is not a Cosy Club for Coddled Conscientious Cowards, as any one may convince himself if he will read the very stringent regulations made by the committee in charge. How it actually works may be seen from a pamphlet by Mr. E. E. Hunter, entitled "The Home Office Compounds." The conditions vary a good deal; sometimes they are extremely bad. Still, on the whole, a man is much better off in a work centre than serving a hard-labour sentence in prison. A man who time after time prefers to accept imprisonment, because his conscience will not allow him to compromise, is at least no coward or shirker. I have already touched on the disabilities which prisoners have to suffer at the beginning of their term, but we must remember that there is much besides. What prison life really involves may be seen in rather harrowing detail in Mrs. Hobhouse's book. It is disgraceful that even hardened criminals should be subjected to some of these conditions; but they are such as it is monstrous to inflict on sensitive, educated men, often in ill-health, whose only fault is that they have dared to be loyal to their conscience at all costs. All conversation with other prisoners is forbidden. Pencil and paper are not allowed, a regulation which presses with ex-

ceptional severity on the more intellectual. Mrs. Hobhouse aptly reminds us how much more benign was a Roman imprisonment in which Paul wrote some of his greatest Epistles, or the imprisonment under Charles II to which we owe the "Pilgrim's Progress." The only news of public events prisoners receive is given in a summary by the chaplain on Sundays. If a prisoner's wife is dying he cannot visit her or be present at her funeral. These are regulations, but much besides occurs in practice. How really severe prison life is may be judged from the following statement: "The hardships of prison to a sensitive, educated man are enormously greater than to the ordinary members of the criminal classes; but for almost all except professional criminals they are very severe. Indeed, those who are responsible for Army discipline know that a certain experience of prison is sufficient to induce unruly soldiers to perform their duty in the trenches." Yet these men, for the sake of principle, face this severity again and again rather than accept the easier alternative of the work centre.

The Home Secretary has announced, since the description I have given was first written, the result of further re-consideration on the part of the Government. I leave what I have written as it stands, since it is only right that the public should know what the actual experience of objectors has been, and since much that I have said will still be applicable. The law, we are told, is to be enforced, but with the gracious concession that some

relaxation of the prison rules is to be allowed to those who have earned marks representing a twelvemonth's sentence, whether these marks have been earned in one or more sentences. He adds that objectors are no longer re-tried for repeated offences. A full two years' imprisonment is given in the first case and carried out. On this several remarks might be made. Does it mean that if a prisoner is now serving a sentence, let us say of 112 days, he will not be re-tried and sentenced to two years when the present sentence expires? Does it mean that instructions have been given to the courts to inflict a two years' sentence in all cases? Will the Government see that when an objector has served two years in the aggregate he will be released? Are we to hope, since these savage and vindictive sentences are still to go on, disgracing our civilization and underlining our national reputation for stupidity, that religious persecution will not be more unrelenting, as hitherto it has been, than the repression of crime?

That it is not merely soft-hearted, weak-headed sentimentalists who are made uneasy by this record will be clear to any one who reads the House of Lords debate. Every one of the speakers repudiated the opinions for which the men in prison are suffering. That those who spoke in support of Lord Parmoor's motion should condemn the severity of treatment is what all would expect, but the fact of their support is, in view of their eminence and experience, very weighty. But expressions of uneasiness and regret were by no means confined to them. The attitude

of the Marquess of Salisbury was much less favourable, but he said this in the course of his speech : " I am altogether against anything like vindictiveness in the punishment of these men. Some of the histories which my noble and learned friend related to your lordships just now I confess did inspire me with feelings of profound regret, and I cannot understand how the Home Office authorities can find it within their duty to keep in prison men who are manifestly unfit to remain in prison." Later he said : " But when my noble friend Lord Lansdowne says, as he did at the end of his speech, that he thinks there is a case for greater leniency of treatment for these men who are kept in prison, I agree with him. I should be glad to see every kind of mitigation granted to these men which is consistent with the maintenance of the law. If they are ill, of course the prison doctors ought to see that they are properly treated ; and if they are so ill that they ought to be released, naturally they should be released. Even if they are not ill at all, there is no reason why there should not be mitigation of their punishment." He hoped such mitigation would be on a liberal scale. Still more striking was the statement of Lord Curzon, since he spoke for the Government, and his general attitude was unsympathetic. He said : " I do think it is true that there are features in the present treatment of these people which excite popular sympathy and even provoke resentment. My noble friend said that, as the result of this Committee to which I have referred, certain changes—' greater elasticity '

was, I think, the phrase which he used—were being introduced into the present Regulations. I think I should like to ask the leave of the House to pursue that matter a little farther. That, it seems to me, is a line upon which more might be done, and upon which I might be in a position a little later to give information to the House."

Few, I imagine, will have the hardihood to deny that a grave injustice has been done, and that in a very large number of cases. It has been proved to the hilt that the intentions of Parliament, the solemn pledges of responsible Ministers, have not been fulfilled. Principles unknown to British administration of justice have been put in practice. We are familiar with the infliction of two sentences on the same criminal for two crimes, those sentences to be endured concurrently. It is a new invention which imposes several sentences for the same offence, to be served one after the other.

Nothing the authorities may do by way of substituting long terms of imprisonment with hard labour will alter the sad record of what has been, or undo the irreparable results. Even as late as November 4, 1917, the actual condition of things was such as antecedently we should have regarded as incredible. Lord Parmoor made the following statement : "At the present time, as far as I can gather—and I believe the number is accurate—there are 1,500 conscientious objectors in prison ; and about 1,000 of these, or about two-thirds of the total, are in prison for the second, third, fourth, or fifth term of imprisonment. Therefore what I

have to say has reference to all those who are undergoing a second or any subsequent successive term of imprisonment. There are 419 serving a second term of imprisonment, 489 serving a third, 34 serving a fourth, and 4 serving a fifth term of imprisonment."

What, then, ought to be done? Some would have us do nothing. Among them there are those to whom it is a source of real satisfaction to think that these men are being made to suffer. To the malevolence which finds pleasure in gloating over the sufferings of the objects of its hate I have nothing to say; its moral degradation is too deep to be reached by any words of mine. Nor, indeed, to any who, after the evidence I have put forward, condemn the whole class as shirkers and shamers; there seems to be no limit to stupidity and greedy credulity. But more consideration is due to the plea that in a titanic struggle like our own, where issues of life and death are in the balance, where right and wrong are locked in mortal struggle, where the issues are still uncertain and civilization trembles on a knife-edge between salvation and destruction, we must decline to turn aside to right any minor wrongs. We have known England stirred from end to end by an apparent miscarriage of justice in the case of an individual. We watched with strange sympathy and painful intensity the drama of the Dreyfus case. The war has brought other grievances in its train, but I do not hear the rebuke addressed to the victims, "Stop snivelling about your grievances and let us get on with the

war." It is clearly realized, at least by the more thoughtful, that grievances fester in the public mind, disturb confidence in our administrators, and weaken allegiance to the country and its cause. To deny their existence, to hush them up, to traduce the victims and censure their champions, is a grave disservice to the State. They must be brought into the light and ventilated, they must be debated in the arena of public opinion. But on our question there has been, save for some noble exceptions, too great a conspiracy of silence. The injustice is creating resentment in many, an uneasy conscience in more.

Several who spoke in the House of Lords debate laid stress on the mischief that was being done in the country by this implacable persecution. Lord Curzon's striking admission I have already quoted. The Bishop of Oxford said: "I should like the House to have in mind the extraordinary embittering effect which the treatment of conscientious objectors is having on circles which, while I do not think they are very large, are of the greatest importance. I do not know that I have any better opportunity than others in this House of coming into contact with those circles to which I am referring, but I mean the people whom you would describe as engaged in social service of various kinds. . . . A good many of these people have great capacity as writers, and I am quite sure that there are roots of bitterness being stored up in this country which will have the most regrettable issues in the days that are coming." Lord Emmott said: "I believe

that treatment of this kind is doing much more harm to public opinion than good to any cowards and shirkers that may be amongst us. It does harm, unfortunately, in the minds of many who believe that this war is just and righteous, and who equally believe that it should not be made the excuse for injustice and unrighteousness." Lord Knutsford, whose plan for dealing with the objectors was to export them, nevertheless said: "Instances have been given to us during this debate of how these men were suffering, and the hushed way in which we received the narration of those instances does show, I think, that we are a little uncomfortable about the treatment these men are receiving." Lord Buckmaster considered there was something much more important at stake than the life and the comfort of these men. "It is the big question of whether or no we shall drive the whole of our administrative machinery across a man's honest view."

I do not doubt that the conscientious objector is very unpopular and a victim of much odium. But the verdict of history on many another unpopular cause bids me look with confidence to the future for the vindication of our plea. And already the clouds are breaking. Memorial after memorial is being sent in to the Government, signed by illustrious and honoured names. Two memorials have recently been presented to the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet, and I have before me a list of those who have signed one or both of these. It includes the names of several Peers and Privy Councillors, of

Members of Parliament and editors of great newspapers, of prominent manufacturers and Labour leaders, of economists, of scholars and literary men, of theologians and ecclesiastical leaders both in the Church of England and in the Free Churches. It includes some who hold distinguished positions in the Army. Not a few statesmen of great eminence and experience are to be found among the signatories. I name Lord Morley, Mr. Arthur Henderson, Mr. J. H. Thomas, Mr. J. W. Wilson. Free Churchmen have frequently expressed impatience with the conservatism of the Bishops, and some disdain of their timidity. The names of six Bishops, three of great distinction, are to be found in this list; but even more significant is the fact that seventeen Bishops have signed the memorial presented by members of the Church of England.

I am thankful that not a few Free Church leaders have stood by those principles to which they are committed by the history of their Communion and the record of their own career. They have taken to heart the warning, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is accordingly futile to lecture us for diverting attention from the conflict. Our critics may as well make up their minds to it that we do not mean to be silent when this glaring wrong calls for remedy. And if they desire the unity of the nation, they would be better advised to get this grievance out of the way. As it is, the wedge of disunion is being driven into the nation by the obstinate refusal even to recognize, to say nothing of righting, an intolerable

wrong. For my own part, I desire unity with all my heart and a speedy triumph for the right; but multitudes of us are being discouraged, and not a few are alienated and angered. The path of justice is the road to unity; let those of our friends who have influence with the authorities bid them take it. If the Government desires to lead a united people to victory, let it remove the causes which foment discord. If it stands as the champion against the domination of Prussia, let it beware lest, in securing our national existence, we forfeit our soul. Even from a prudential standpoint it would pay us. So long as the wrong remains unrighted, so long the authorities will have the trouble on their hands. Let them settle it, that there may be one less of the numerous causes of disaffection. And if it be urged that the country is like an athlete running a great race, and that we ought not to worry it over such trifles as justice, I would reply that, quite apart from the fact that a just God rules the universe, the runner is to be commended who attends to such a trifle as tying his laces or removing a jagged pebble from his shoes.

X

WHAT, then, ought to be done? Obviously the pledges of the Government should cease to be treated as scraps of paper, and a people that honoured its engagements to Belgium should honour its own promises, which so greatly eased the passing of the Military Service Acts. Obviously, these men, however objectionable, should get their legal rights and cease to be treated more severely than criminals. And I put it to those who dislike and despise the objectors that if they count it a mere trifle that they should suffer, and are glad that for them the way should be made exceedingly hard, it is not a light thing that Britain should be false to her word or callously refuse to rectify a patent wrong. Yet I am not sanguine that the Government will retrace its steps so far as at once to grant absolute exemption to those who stand on the same footing as the four hundred who have received it, even though they have proved by their readiness to prefer imprisonment to the work centre that their objection is rooted in principle. But, short of this, the Government might still refuse any longer to affront the sentiment of some of the best moral elements in the community. A Commission might be appointed, as I suggested at an

earlier stage long ago, as the Primitive Methodist Conference requested in June 1916, and as was powerfully urged in the debate in the House of Lords on November 14, 1917. When we observe that among those who pleaded for our cause on that occasion were Lord Parmoor, the Marquess of Lansdowne, Lord Bryce, Lord Buckmaster, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Oxford, it will be clear by what weighty authority this plea was supported, and that from both sides of the House. It ought to be plain enough that this is no mere campaign of faddists and idealists. It has enlisted the support of some of the most experienced statesmen in the country, some of them not conspicuous for sympathy with progressive ideas, and all of them, I believe, convinced that we did our duty when we declared war.

And if it is urged that we need not trouble about conscientious objectors, since they are better off in prison than they would be in the trenches, the answer is not difficult. I do not think any words can do justice to the amazing heroism and sacrifice which our soldiers and sailors have displayed. Their service is too great for adulation ; we shall treasure the splendour of their heroism in our hearts, nor ever cease to be grateful that they have accepted privations and incredible hardship, wounds, captivity, and death that they might protect their homes and their country. Yet I do not hesitate to say that, had I to choose between the lot of the soldier and that of those for whom I am pleading, I should select the former. For then

I should be swimming with the stream, sustained, not only by inward conviction, but by universal applause. The sense that I was in a great and mighty movement, striking my hardest for freedom and for right, would uplift me. But, choosing the other, though with the approval of my conscience, I should be pulling against a raging torrent of popular opinion, branded as a coward, my conduct explained by the meanest, most contemptible motives, my name cast out with scorn by the servants of that Master whose will I was, in this refusal of military service, seeking to do. And if any one tells me that I might decide differently, when really confronted with such a choice, I should reply that he does not understand me, but refer him to what Mrs. Hobhouse says, who has three sons in the trenches and one in prison: "I answer, as the mother of sons in France, who are daily risking their lives, subjected to the horrors and discomforts of the trenches, that I feel less distress at their fate, fighting as they are their country's battles, with the approval of their fellows, than I do for that other son undergoing for his faith a disgraceful sentence in a felon's cell, truly 'rejected and despised' of men."

And now I draw this argument to a close. It was not at all in my mind to write at such length, and I am conscious that some may feel that the very elaboration of the case is a confession of its weakness. For they will say: "Our men who volunteered to fight needed no lengthy, laboured justification of their conscience. They saw their duty, and did

it." But, of course, in present conditions military service calls for no justification at the bar of the nation, nor any plea for the undoing of a wrong. Yet at a higher bar than that of public opinion we are summoned to justify the conscience of those who have gone to fight; and let no one imagine that this is a task to be lightly undertaken. Both causes, if they are to be justified, not simply to the instinctive feeling, but at the judgment seat of reason, demand a long and patient trial. I might retort that in exactly the same instinctive, unreflective way the conscientious objector may have argued. One man says: "Our cause is righteous, liberty and my country need defence, my conscience bids me go." The other may say: "My moral instincts tell me that all war is wrong; I clearly see it to be forbidden by my Master; I must be true to my conscience, hard though it be to face the execration which my decision will involve, and accept as my portion the lot of the outcast." And if it is a long task to analyse and explain the position of the objector, it is certainly no simpler and no shorter task to demonstrate the compatibility of war with Christianity. Moreover, much of my book has been occupied with the refutation of criticisms. I do not need to remind my readers that a criticism may be stated in a sentence, but several pages may be needed adequately to examine and refute it.

I am conscious that some whose friendship I value may feel distressed or even indignant to find me associated with such a position, and I am

sorry that they should be grieved. But for me also this has been a clear call of conscience which I may not disobey. And I do my friends who disagree with me the justice to believe that they will approve my submission to what I take to be the Heavenly will. I ask them to extend the same consideration to those whose cause it has been my honour and my privilege to plead.

APPENDIX

**STATEMENT AS TO THE CONCESSIONS NOW
ACTUALLY BEING GIVEN TO MEN IN PRISON
UNDER PRISON REGULATION 243A AS AN-
NOUNCED BY LORD CURZON DEC. 4, 1917.**

Exercise and Conversation.

Men are allowed to converse with their partner during exercise, which is given twice a day instead of once. (In some prisons a change of partner is not allowed; this should be rectified.)

Books.

Prisoners are allowed to have four books of their own in their cells. (These should be allowed both from the prison library and from outside.)

Letters.

Prisoners are allowed to write and receive a shorter letter once a fortnight instead of a longer

one once a month. (Even with paper shortage this seems an unnecessary economy.)

Visits.

In some prisons visits are now paid in a private room in the presence of a warder, instead of in the "cage." As a general rule no alteration has been made in the length of the visit, but sometimes men have been given an additional visit or an extra fifteen minutes, while in other cases the visit has actually been shortened to fifteen minutes instead of half an hour as was previously allowed.

Clothing.

Prisoners are allowed to wear their own clothes. In the matter of clothes conscientious objector prisoners generally cannot afford to dispense with the prison clothes entirely. They should be allowed to supplement them with extra changes of under-clothing, with overcoats and blankets. They suffer cruelly from cold in their cells, frequently very insufficiently heated.

THE FEELING THAT THE TREATMENT OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS HAS BEEN HARSH HAS LED TO AGITATION, WHICH MIGHT BE ALLAYED IF THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS WERE ENFORCED:—

- (a) All conscientious objectors who have been one year in prison to be released as sufficiently punished.
- (b) Those conscientious objectors who admittedly should have received absolute exemption from the Tribunals to be released forthwith.
- (c) Systematic reports to be obtained upon all cases by medical practitioners other than the medical officers of the prisons, and all conscientious objectors in ill health to be released without pressure from outside before they become seriously ill, insane, or permanently incapacitated.
- (d) The following ameliorations to be granted to all conscientious objectors who have been in prison six months—
 - i. Use of writing materials and extra books supplied by their friends, and more time for reading and study.

2. Friends or relatives to be allowed to send in a certain amount of food. The men suffer severely from hunger and unsuitable food.
3. Conversation in association, with choice and change of companions. (If only one man in any prison is eligible for this concession he should be removed to another prison, otherwise it becomes a dead letter in his case, as in the case of conscientious objectors in prison hospital.)
4. Additional letters and visits more liberally construed.

SOME TYPICAL CASES OF CONSCIENTIOUS
OBJECTORS WHO PRESUMABLY RECEIVED
CONDITIONAL EXEMPTION BECAUSE THE
TRIBUNALS WERE UNDER THE IMPRES-
SION THAT IT WAS NOT WITHIN THEIR
POWER TO GRANT TOTAL EXEMPTION.

*(These examples by no means exhaust the list of
such men now doing hard labour.)*

EARL CURZON of Kedleston. House of Lords,
December 4, 1917 (Hansard).

"The noble lords who were present at the debate will recall that one of the points made on that occasion was the suggestion that there were a certain number of men at the present moment serving in the Army who claimed absolute exemption, and who would have been given it by the Tribunals acting in their statutory capacity had the Tribunals been aware that they had power to give absolute exemption. It was agreed between us that a letter should be written by the War Office to the Local Government Board on the following lines:—

'It having been represented that there are at the present moment serving in the Army a certain number of men who would have

been given absolute exemption by the Tribunals had such Tribunals been aware that they had power to give absolute exemption, the Army Council would be grateful if the Local Government Board could see their way to circularizing Tribunals asking whether such has been the case, and if so, that the names of any men who would have received absolute exemption may be forwarded to the War Office for their consideration.'

"It is obvious that some little time must elapse before we can obtain the information which is here sought for, but that, I think noble lords will agree, is the best method by which to proceed."

MALCOLM SPARKES.

Malcolm Sparkes is a member of the Society of Friends. At the time of his arrest Mr. Sparkes was engaged on a Memorandum on Industrial Parliaments, which he was preparing at the request of a Government Reconstruction Committee.

As he is in prison this work, which the Chairman of the Industrial Reconstruction Committee described as "a most valuable piece of work meeting a great and urgent national need," is still unfinished.

The local Tribunal referred him to the Pelham Committee for work of national importance, who agreed to accept his present occupation as coming under that heading. The Tribunal refused to confirm the decision of the Pelham Committee and

only exempted him from combatant service. This exemption was withdrawn by the Appeal Tribunal.

He was arrested in January 1917, and is now serving a sentence of two years' hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs.

ROBERT OSCAR MENNELL.

Robert Oscar Mennell, of Woden Law, Kenley, Surrey, is a member of Purley Preparative Meeting.

He is Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the Friends' Service Committee, Member of the Friends' Emergency Committee for the Relief of Aliens in Distress, and of other Committees, fourteen in all. He is a partner of the firm of Tuke, Mennell & Son, tea merchants, of Idol Lane, E.C.

The Coulsden and Purley local Tribunal on July 31, 1916, heard his application for "absolute exemption," and ordered him to "do work of national importance."

The appeal was heard by the Surrey and Croydon Appeal Tribunal on September 5th, at the Croydon Town Hall. The local Tribunal's decision was upheld, but the Tribunal gave special leave of appeal to the Central Tribunal on the point as to whether applicant's public voluntary work was of sufficient national importance to grant him conditional exemption upon continuing it.

On October 13, 1916, R. O. Mennell was informed that the Central Tribunal had decided to refer him to the (Pelham) Committee on Work of National Importance.

On December 30, 1916, he was arrested at Kenley and at the Surrey County Court, Croydon, was handed over to the military authorities, handcuffed to his escort. Since then he has been four times court-martialled, and is now serving his third sentence in Maidstone civil prison.

Mennell is a man of considerable distinction. His family have been Quakers for eight generations. He has deeply rooted religious convictions and has shown by his life the sincerity of his faith. He should undoubtedly have been given absolute exemption, as he was unable to accept the alternative offered. He has suffered severe punishment in prison, where he has been for eighteen months. At his court martial on January 13, 1917, he said: "I am convinced that it is in the power of a country like England, by applying the principles of Christianity in her relations with other countries, to release the world from the growing tyranny of fear, suspicion, and armaments." Again at his court martial at Gravesend, November 23, 1917, he said: "Though the sincerity of my objections to war was admitted by three Tribunals and the value of my voluntary work acknowledged in the warmest terms, I was only offered exemption on certain conditions which I could not conscientiously fulfil, with the result that I was arrested, fined, handcuffed, and thereafter deemed to be a soldier." This man has suffered three terms of hard labour and solitary confinement.

MAURICE L. ROWNTREE.

Mr. Rowntree is a Quaker, aged 30, son of the late Joshua Rowntree, M.P. After taking his degree at Oxford he accepted the post of lecturer to the Swarthmore Settlement, Leeds.

The local Tribunal gave him twenty-one days in which to find work of national importance, but as his own work was not considered to come under this heading he was unable to accept the conditions. His case was dismissed by the Appeal Tribunal in spite of protests from two members of the Tribunal who testified to the value of his work. He was arrested in 1916.

In March 1917 the Scarborough Free Church Council, of which Mr. Rowntree was Vice-President, unanimously carried a resolution protesting against his first court-martial sentence of two years' hard labour.

He is now serving his second sentence, also of two years' hard labour, at Armley Gaol, Leeds, where he was for some time in hospital.

HERBERT RUNHAM BROWN.

Mr. Runham Brown claimed absolute exemption on Christian grounds. He joined the Congregational Church at New Tabernacle in Old Street in 1895, and has for many years taken an active part in Sunday School, Temperance, and Missionary work.

Three members of the Local Tribunal voted to grant him absolute exemption and four voted

against it, the result being exemption from combatant service. The Appeal Tribunal withdrew this and dismissed the case.

Mr. Brown is now serving his third sentence of hard labour at Wandsworth Prison.

ERIC P. SOUTHALL.

Eric Southall is a birthright member of the Society of Friends, and has been an active worker in the Peace Movement for some years.

The local Tribunal exempted him from combatant service; and the Appeal Tribunal confirmed this decision but complimented him on the way he put his case, and said they refused his claim to absolute exemption "with regret and reluctance." The Central Tribunal, before whom he appeared when in prison, considered him genuine and went so far as to remark that they could not understand why he had not been given absolute exemption. He has been in prison and guard-rooms ever since June 1916.

ALBERT MANN.

Albert Mann is a member of the Society of Friends, Northern Friends' Peace Board, Hon. Secretary of the Liverpool Peace Society, Secretary of the Temperance Society and National Anti-Gambling League, and is an Adult School worker. He has been a Post Office telegraphist for twenty-seven years on the Foreign Staff, and

was exempted from the Military Service Act by the Postmaster-General until January 1917. He was at that time 41 years of age.

At the expiration of his exemption he received a further exemption till August 1, 1917, unless he was required in the meanwhile for service with the Royal Engineers, Signal Section. In February he was told by the Postmaster he must be medically examined by an Army Medical Board ; he replied that on conscientious grounds he could not agree to be examined or to accept service with the Royal Engineers. In April the Local and Appeal Tribunal ordered him to find work of national importance under the supervision of the Friends' Ambulance Unit. He refused the Home Office Scheme and is now serving his second sentence—one year's hard labour—in Shrewsbury Prison.

ALFRED TAYLOR.

Alfred Taylor is a member of the Congregational Church and assistant Secretary to the local Sunday School. He claimed absolute exemption on religious grounds.

The local and Appeal Tribunals exempted him from combatant service. This he could not accept.

He was arrested in May 1916, and subsequently taken to France, where he was sentenced to death by shooting ; this was commuted to ten years' penal servitude. He was brought to England to serve this sentence and is now in Maidstone Civil Prison on the convict side.

His mother states that he had been offered work of national importance four times and had always refused it.

DR. J. C. McCALLUM.

Dr. McCallum is a Graduate in Arts and Medicine of Edinburgh University; D.P.H. of Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons; Medallist in most of his medical classes and awarded the Monat Scholarship for the most distinguished graduate in surgery of his year. Prior to his appointment as M.O.H. in Argyllshire he devoted himself to practical and research work in Edinburgh, Liverpool, and London hospitals.

His appeals at the district and county Tribunal were dismissed. After serving his first sentence of 112 days he accepted work under the Home Office scheme, but was subsequently returned to the Army.

His father has a private letter from the Under Secretary of State for War acknowledging the genuineness of Dr. McCallum's conscientious objections.

He is now in Perth Prison serving his third sentence.

WILFRED E. LITTLEBOY.

Wilfred Littleboy, a Chartered Accountant, is a member of the Society of Friends, and occupied a prominent position among the Friends in the Midlands. He is an appointed "Elder" of his Church, an Adult School teacher, and a social

worker. His leisure time has been spent in the study of religious and social questions with a view to reconstruction in the near future.

The Local Tribunal granted him exemption from combatant service. He was arrested in December 1916. He has served sentences of 112 days' hard labour and 6 months' hard labour, and is now undergoing a third sentence of two years' hard labour in Dorchester Civil Prison.

WILFRED WELLOCK.

Mr. Wellock is a journalist. He has also been connected with the cotton trade. He spent four years in Edinburgh University and was one of the Presidents of the University Historical Society. He was a Sunday School teacher, a local preacher, and for many years before the war had publicly stated his pacifist views in speeches, sermons, and articles.

The religious denomination to which Mr. Wellock belongs does not possess a paid ministry, but the War Office agreed that the ministers who applied as ministers should receive exemption. Mr. Wellock refused to consider this proposal, as he regarded the exception of ministers as a class privilege, unjust and unwarrantable.

The local and Appeal Tribunal offered him work of national importance. Mr. Wellock was granted a rehearing by the local Tribunal, when he received exemption from combatant service only. When he appealed against this decision to the Appeal Tribunal the Chairman admitted

that he had a very strong case, but said, in view of the statement made in the House of Commons by Mr. Lloyd George a day or two before, he did not think they could grant absolute exemption. He pleaded with the appellant to try and take work of national importance, and said they would give him a further twenty-one days in which to think the matter over, at the same time expressing his sorrow at not being able to give a better decision. He hoped the appellant would realize the difficulty of the Tribunal's position. Mr. Wellock could not accept this offer, and on January 29, 1917, he was arrested.

He served one sentence of three months' hard labour, and is now serving a second of two years' hard labour in Shrewsbury Gaol.

WILLIAM THEODORE NEWBY.

Mr. Newby is a member of the Society of Friends, and went out to France with the Friends' Ambulance Unit. When the Military Service Acts came into force he returned to England and took up his stand as a conscientious objector.

The local Tribunal gave him twenty-one days in which to find work of national importance, which he refused. The Appeal Tribunal granted him non-combatant service.

He was arrested in January 1917, and has been court-martialled three times. He is now serving a sentence of two years' hard labour in Maidstone Prison.

WALTER GEORGE GRIFFIN.¹

Walter Griffin was training for missionary work, and his pastor, the Rev. William Wallis, writes that Griffin has already done splendid work with him in South Wales, Hereford, and also in various missions in Birmingham.

The local Tribunal gave him work of national importance ; the Appeal Tribunal dismissed his case.

He is now serving a sentence of two years' hard labour in Canterbury Civil Prison. This is his third sentence.

THOMAS F. DRAYTON.

Mr. Drayton is a letter-sorter, aged 42. At one time he was an associate of the Society of Friends, but left them owing to the attitude of some of the adherents of the Society towards questions arising out of the Boer War, but his opposition to war was as strong as ever.

The local Tribunal referred his case to the Committee on Work of National Importance, who recommended that he should be retained in his regular employment as a letter-sorter, as it was work which would come under that category. The military representative appealed against this, and the Appeal Tribunal told him to find work of national importance other than his own within twenty-one days. This offer Mr. Drayton refused. He was arrested in August 1916 and is now serving his fourth sentence —two years' hard labour—in Wandsworth Prison.

¹ Information has just been received that the Leamington Tribunal, before whom Walter George Griffin appeared, have decided to forward his case to the Army Authorities for reconsideration.

THE FOLLOWING STATISTICS ARE OF MELANCHOLY INTEREST. THOSE WHO REGRET THE SACRIFICE OF YOUNG LIVES WILL HAVE WELCOMED LORD CURZON'S ANNOUNCEMENT, AND SINCERELY HOPE THAT ALL CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN A POOR STATE OF HEALTH WILL BE PROMPTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON AND CAMP.

EARL CURZON OF KEDLESTON SAID (HANSARD) :

"THE last question which was raised in the debate here was as to the treatment of persons imprisoned when on medical grounds there was reason to think that they might fairly be released. . . . The Home Office will submit from time to time to the War Office the names of soldiers who are serving sentences of imprisonment in civil prisons, for offences against discipline on the grounds of conscience, and who are reported upon by prison medical officers as being in a poor state of health, and who are for this reason recommended for release from prison. On receipt of those names, the ordinary machinery of transferring soldiers to the Reserve can be set in motion by the branches concerned, and the men in question will then be transferred to one of the Reserve classes, where

they will draw neither pay nor allowances—no one would, of course, contend that in those circumstances they should be in receipt of pay—and whence they could be recalled to the Colours by the military authorities as and when required. . . .”

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS WHO HAVE DIED IN PRISON AND CAMP, OR AFTER RELEASE ON GROUNDS OF ILLNESS.

WALTER ROBERTS.

Walter Roberts was only 20 when arrested in May 1916. He had almost served his first court-martial sentence of 112 days when he was released from prison to take up work under the Home Office Scheme at Dyce Quarry Camp, Aberdeen. He died on September 8, 1916, of pneumonia, contracted apparently as a result of the condition of the camp. The tents were said to be leaking, there were no facilities for drying, no one to look after him who had any experience of nursing, and he was under canvas from first to last.

ROYLE RICHMOND.

Royle Richmond may be said to have given his life rather than accept military authority. He suffered from heart disease, but he felt that to apply for exemption on medical grounds, or submit to medical examination by the military authorities, would be compromising with the evil

which he was fighting, so in April 1916, after his case had been dismissed by the Appeal Tribunal, he was arrested and taken to barracks. It was six weeks before he received his discharge papers. He rallied slightly during the summer after his release, but the strain had been too much for him and he died on January 4, 1917, aged 26. He was an artist of exceptional ability.

ALBERT LEVERSON JAMES.

Albert Leverson James, a provision stores manager, aged 30, was arrested in November 1916, court-martialled and sent to Wormwood Scrubbs. There he suffered terribly with cold, and his fellow-workers said it was evident that he was going into consumption. The weather was arctic. On March 1st, suffering with ague, he was sent to Wakefield Work Centre, where he broke down, had a haemorrhage, and was put in hospital. On March 12th the doctor said the case was hopeless. Leverson James was in rapid consumption. He died on May 17, 1917.

J. LLEWELLYN EVANS.

J. Llewellyn Evans had "never known a day's illness" when he entered Cardiff Prison on June 30, 1916, to serve his first court-martial sentence. He was a clerk, aged 24, and in his spare time was studying for the Baptist ministry. In September he had a bad cough and appeared to be

in a weak state of health when released to take up work at Newhaven Road Board Camp, where he became worse. He was transferred to Wakefield Work Centre, admitted to hospital after a week, found to be suffering from consumption, and finally sent home, where he died on Whit Sunday, 1917.

A. E. (*At the parents' request the full name of this man is not given.*)

A. E., a young piano tuner, was very religious. He taught in a Sunday School, and was a member of the Presbyterian Church. Although highly-strung, he had shown no signs of mental or nervous disorder when he was court-martialled as a conscientious objector on October 2, 1917, but within six weeks he was removed to —— Lunatic Asylum, where he died in June 1917.

BENNETT WALLIS.

Bennett Wallis, a Plymouth Brother, refused on religious grounds to have anything to do with the Military Service Acts. He was therefore court-martialled in July 1916, and sent to prison. He accepted the Home Office Scheme, and on September 16, 1916, was sent to Newhaven Road Board Camp, where he was much respected and liked by his fellow-workers. He suffered from dyspepsia. He was finally sent on September 27, 1917, to Newhaven Union Hospital. On the 29th Wallis died in the hospital.

ARTHUR BUTLER.

Arthur Butler gained scholarships at an early age which entitled him to an education at Stockport Grammar School, where he was said to be a brilliant scholar. He was well proportioned and full of vitality when classified as A1 at the time of his arrest in July 1916. He was court-martialled three times as a conscientious objector, and apart from short intervals in barracks while awaiting fresh sentences, was in prison for seventeen months. Early in November 1917 he complained of a cough and other symptoms. The medical officer stated that he was receiving every attention for this, but in a subsequent letter Arthur Butler said that he was no better. The family record, to which the prison doctor's attention was drawn about this time, is very significant. Several of Butler's near relatives died of consumption. On December 13, 1917, Arthur Butler died of pneumonia in Preston prison.

He had a generous disposition, and even when dying spoke no ill of those whose actions had reduced him to this state, but rather emphasised any little kindness which had been shown to him. When asked if he regretted the attitude he had taken up he said no, that he would be prepared to do the same again. He was 28 years of age.

ARTHUR HORTON.

Arthur Horton, a clog maker, aged 25, objected to military service on religious grounds. He had been attending the Society of Friends' meetings in

his district for some time. His case was dismissed by both Tribunals, and he was arrested on October 13, 1916, court-martialled and sent to prison, where he remained, except for two short intervals, for further courts martial, for thirteen months. He was classed A1 when arrested, and while serving his first sentence he contracted a cough, and in the summer of 1917 he was ill for a week with colic. He told his sister he was a dying man when he was in camp for the last time in September, and he appears to have been in a weak condition when returned to prison. On December 10, 1917, he was taken seriously ill, and a day or two afterwards developed broncho-pneumonia. He was seen by his family several times, and at the end of December it was thought that he was improving, but he had two relapses, and on January 4, 1918, information was received that he was seriously ill, and on the free visiting list. A special doctor was sent by the Home Office to see Horton, and it was not until the evening of the 6th, after his visit, that two trained nurses arrived from Birmingham. Arthur Horton died on the evening of January 16, 1918.

H. W. FIRTH.

H. W. Firth, a boot and shoe operative of Norwich, was arrested on March 3, 1917. He was court-martialled on March 13, 1917, served a sentence of six months, was again court-martialled on August 25, 1917, and sent to Maidstone prison. There he became so unwell that on November 21st

he petitioned the Home Office to be allowed to take work under the Scheme. On December 31st he was sent to Princetown Home Office Settlement. The day after his arrival he was sent to work on the quarry. He appeared to the other conscientious objectors to be suffering from malnutrition and general weakness. Later he was put on indoor night work, whitewashing kitchen, etc. By January 23rd he was in hospital. He died on Wednesday, February 6th, at 9 a.m. at the very time when his wife had started for Princetown on hearing of his critical condition.

In a letter dated January 17, 1918, he gave the following account of his condition :—

" I have been feeling very ill for this last three months. I have been gradually getting weaker and weaker for a long time, and at last I got so weak that I felt I could not stop in prison any longer, so I made an application on November 21, 1917, for the Home Office Scheme, as I thought that by getting out of prison was my only chance of recovery. I was given the scheme, and released on Monday, December 31, 1917.

" I might say I was continually going to the doctors, but this is of no use since he cannot cure a man of a disease that is caused by the prison. It seems to me that all the organs of my body got so thoroughly weak that they refused to do their work, so for a long time they have been working by the aid of drugs, which has no doubt ruined my stomach and bowels. I knew I was weak for I could hardly do the forty minutes' exercise, nor could I walk

straight or stoop without dizziness; but being accustomed to the narrow circle of prison life and its lack of need for physical activity on the part of the prisoner, I have found that now I am out and in a broader field where more activity is required I am much weaker than I thought, and cannot eat the food here without violent pains of the stomach, and after such I can scarcely walk. I have been to the doctor here, but he tells me I am all right and persistently sends me to work with a quarry party.

"As a matter of fact I ought to be put on a special diet and allowed to have a few weeks' rest as I am nothing but a case of bones. I was shocked when I looked at myself in the mirror to see such a change in a few months. I not only suffered physically but I found that my mind was going wrong, for my thoughts became quite confused and my mind quite morbid. Yours fraternally,

"(Signed) H. W. FIRTH."

In addition to the above, three conscientious objectors have committed suicide, and two have been found drowned.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS CERTIFIED INSANE.]

(*House of Commons, November 5, 1917.*)

SIR G. CAVE stated in the House of Commons on November 5, 1917:—

"Up to the end of last month twelve prisoners had been certified insane who had been convicted

by court martial of disobedience to military orders and had claimed that their offence was due to a conscientious objection to military service. Of these, seven were confined in Wormwood Scrubbs (where a large number of conscientious objectors are confined) and one in each of Birmingham, Derby, Liverpool, Shepton Mallet, and Wandsworth prisons."

LENGTH OF SENTENCES SERVED BY CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN PRISON.

February 14, 1918.

Out of a total of 1,137 conscientious objectors now in prison—

175 have served a sentence of 20 months.

109	"	"	18	"
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223	"	"	15	"
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261	"	"	12	"
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The remaining 469 men have served shorter sentences.

* In serving twenty months these men have, for practical purposes, served two years, as a remission of one-sixth is given for good conduct. The conditions of imprisonment with hard labour are so rigorous that a two years' sentence is supposed to be as much as a strong man can stand, and the authorities therefore make it the maximum. If the Court thinks a longer sentence necessary, penal servitude, the rules for which are less stringent, must be imposed.

RESOLUTION UNANIMOUSLY PASSED BY THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PRIMITIVE METHO-
DIST CHURCH IN JUNE 1916

THAT this annual Conference of the Primitive Methodist Church views with grave concern the attitude of many civil and military authorities to the plea of conscientious objection to military service. While we deplore all glorification of war and repudiate the view that it is good in itself, the great majority of those for whom we speak are convinced that we could not have declined the present conflict without betrayal of those who trusted in our word, and that it is our duty to use all legitimate means to secure a definite victory. It has been in loyalty to their conscience that tens of thousands in our Church have obeyed the call of their country.

As Christians we affirm that every Christian must obey "for conscience' sake" the command to "be in subjection to the higher powers" which "are ordained of God." We disown the claim that a citizen may accept all the advantages of the State and decline all share in its burdens. We repudiate such an interpretation of Christianity as would forbid the protection of the helpless from outrage, or neglect the primary duty of ministry to the suffering. But equally as Christians we affirm

without misgiving or reserve the inviolable sanctity of conscience and its sovereign authority. As a Church we are pledged alike by our history and our principles not to withhold our sympathy from those who are resolute to suffer all things rather than violate their inmost convictions. We are fully assured that there are many who in this crisis refuse military service, not from slackness or cowardice, but with a heavy heart, and for the loftiest religious and moral reasons.

We are grateful that the Government made provision for the case of conscientious objectors, and are persuaded that the pledges on the strength of which its proposals received so large a support in Parliament were given with the full intention that they should be honourably fulfilled. We deeply regret that our reasonable expectation has been disappointed. While we deprecate any indiscriminate criticism of the Tribunals and other courts, acknowledge their difficulties, and admit that the folly and perversity of some objectors have provoked not unnatural indignation, we are forced by an increasing volume of evidence to the conclusion that in many instances the attitude has been unsympathetic, the handling of the cases unskilful, the sentences vindictive, the intention frankly disloyal to the purpose of Parliament.

We express our unqualified abhorrence of the deliberate and savage brutality with which some men have been treated. We urge that the Government shall enforce on all bodies charged with administering the Act the policy to which it is

pledged ; that uniform treatment shall be given to conscientious objectors by all Tribunals ; that they shall in no case be handed over at any point of the proceedings to the Military Authorities ; and that those at present in civil or military custody shall be released, pending the consideration of their case by a competent court. We suggest that such a court should at once be constituted, on which men of high character and intelligence should be placed, qualified to recognize and understand a genuine conscientious objection. We ask further for unambiguous assurances that in no case shall the death penalty be inflicted for refusal on grounds of conscience to obey military orders.

We urge that in the best interests of the nation care should be taken to provide objectors with such forms of national service as they can accept without violating their convictions. The unity which has been our strength is likely to be destroyed if the policy of persecution is further pursued.

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